



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

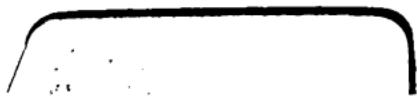
- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



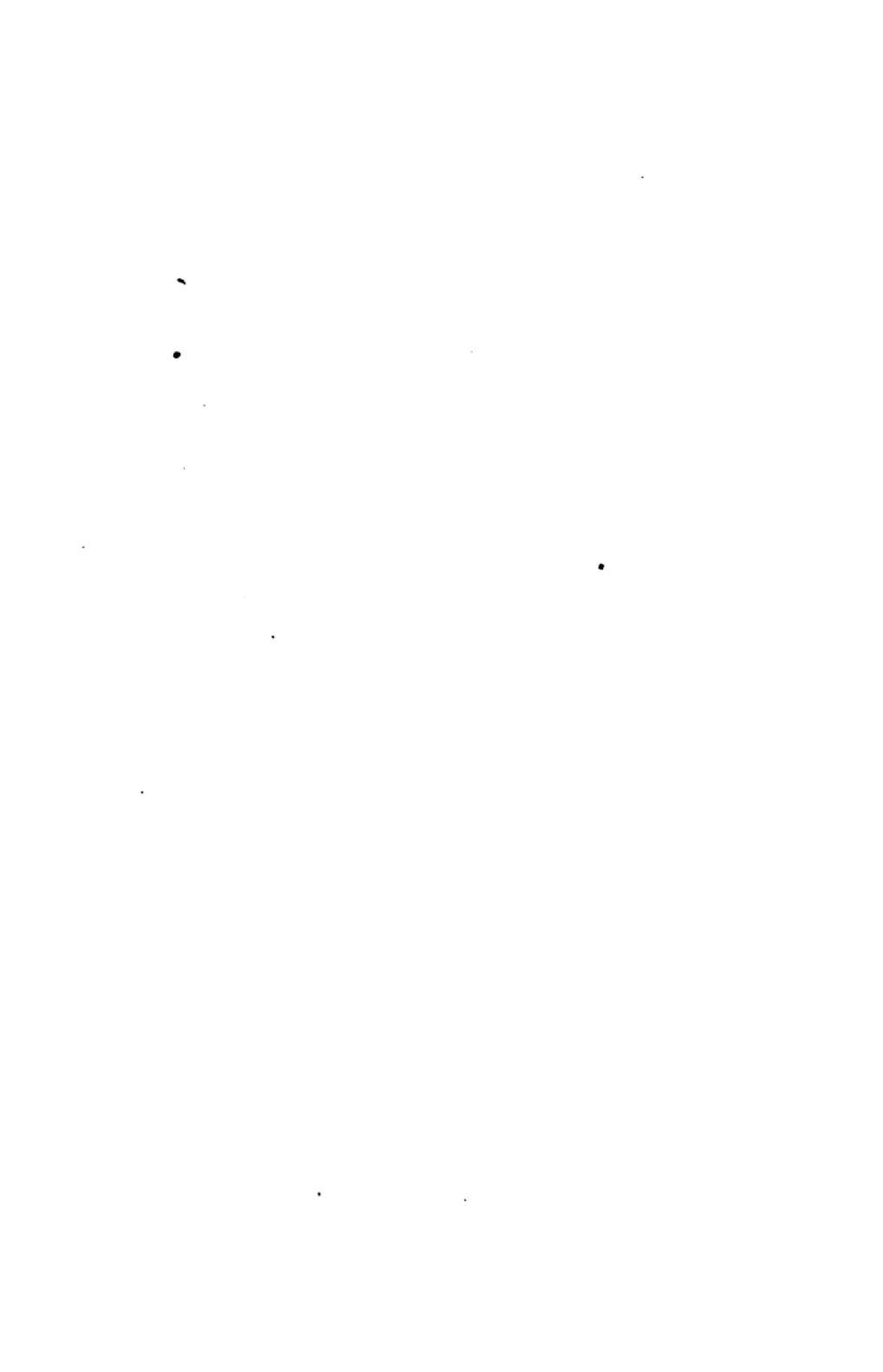
45. 1112.







MUTUAL CHRISTIANITY.



MUTUAL CHRISTIANITY;

OR,

THE DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS

“ONE TO ANOTHER.”

BY THE

REV. J. DE KEWER WILLIAMS.

LATE OF Highbury College, now of Limerick.



“Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it;—that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”—PAUL TO THE SAINTS AT EPHESUS.

LONDON:

JOHN SNOW, 35, PATERNOSTER ROW.

—
1845.

LONDON:

P. P. THOMS, PRINTER, WARWICK SQUARE.

TO

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN LIMERICK,

THESE DISCOURSES ON

MUTUAL CHRISTIANITY,

FIRST PREACHED TO

THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH IN THEIR CITY,

ARE NOW DEDICATED,

AS A PROOF OF LOVE, AND WITH THE PRAYER OF FAITH,

BY THEIR

BROTHER AND SERVANT IN THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST,

J. DE KEWER WILLIAMS.



P R E F A C E.

THE Author of these Discourses is well aware that there are many defects in the expression and arrangement of his thoughts. Nor would he willingly send them as they are before the Christian public. But, in consequence of the many duties of his solitary pastorate, and the delicate state of his health, the only question was, whether they should appear just as they were preached, or not at all? He chose the former alternative, believing that they may do some good to the class for whom they were prepared, especially in the country in which they were delivered. However, he now invites the attention of the Christian, not that of the critic. For the former he has written; not for the latter. For Ireland's sake, he puts forth this book, with the hope and the prayer that it may diffuse more widely and deeply scriptural views of the constitution of Christian churches and the obligations of their members. May the Head bless it to some of his members; and soon make his church in Ireland flourish abundantly, and be absolutely free to obey every dictate of her Lord.



THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH IN CHRIST.

ROMANS xii. 5.

" So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."

" I WILL praise thee, O Lord," said the royal Psalmist, " for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well." And that ascription of praise is most reasonable. For there is something marvellous in all the creations of God. The smallest and the meanest of them is not to be imitated with success. To form an ant, or even a blade of grass, would exceed the skill of all the artists in the world. But man is the great master-piece of this creation. The human frame is replete with contrivances the most ingenious, and affords a singular instance of the complication of parts with simplicity and consistency of purpose. " We have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office." But the office of each contributes to the perfection of the whole, which would not be perfect if deprived of the smallest part. And the healthy action of all the members constitutes a harmony the most

amazing, as long as the life-giving Spirit pervades the body.

This most remarkable instance of diversity in unity the Apostle employs as the most appropriate emblem of the company to which he addressed the text, calling them "Brethren." Nor did he intend it for them alone, for he addressed it also to brethren at Corinth, as well as to those at Rome.. Moreover, in that case, he added, "with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." And to such in every age and in every place it belongs,—even to the entire church, and to every individual church of Christ. My beloved brethren, it is ours, as well as theirs, if we are like them. We profess to be called with the same holy and heavenly calling. Let us, then, consider this declaration as intended for our encouragement and instruction. It consists of two distinct but dependent parts. The first of these (which we would recommend to your most serious reflection, intending to make it the foundation of several discourses) is,

I. OUR RELATION TO THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH.

"We, being many, are one body in Christ." A wonderful sentence;—most wonderful! And the expression and intention coincide. The Apostle means what he says;—employs a figure, yet not for the sake of the figure, but as the actual representative of a fact; points us to our own body, with its one head and many members, all subject to the one Spirit animating the whole, and says *that just such is our relation to Christ.* He is

our Head, and we are his members ; and this Christ is the Lord's anointed,—the equal Son of God the Father. Behold, dear brethren, in this I shew you a great mystery. Even angels desire to look into it; and well may the saints. Meditate then upon it, intelligently and reverently ; that you may obtain a yet deeper and clearer insight into a mystery which, being revealed, cannot be known by the natural man, but ought to be known by every spiritual man. And I will just offer a few remarks to guide your reflections.

1st. *This relation is not natural, but acquired ;—not universal but particular.*

That is to say, men do not come to it by birth ; nor is it conferred on them in bodies. We are accustomed to speak of Christendom, and to regard its children as a body ; those who belong to which may count themselves happy. But they are not the body of Christ. It is not constituted of any such mixed multitude, or it would be the seat of the most evil principles and the vilest passions that have disgraced humanity. For although these things are less frequent in Christendom than out of it, they are found in it in their worst forms and in great abundance.—Again we hear of nations embracing Christianity, which is then established as the national religion ; and thenceforih all the people, whether they profess and call themselves Christians or not, are considered to be such. But the same argument would apply against a nation, and against a number of nations called Christian. The purest nation embodies a degree and a kind of corruption which cannot be in the body of Christ.—

Such modes of speech, however, are base language, are very impudent and highly impudent—over impudent. True and pure Christianity is an individual thing, and a thing which no earthly relation whatsoever can touch. Even the ecclesiastical Church of these realms allows this—admits that it is a Divine but not a human ordinance that confirms a Christian, and this at an individual, —making its children or not. “In my baptism I was made a member of Christ.” But also! to speak the truth, and we speak it in love, this is, after all, but substituting one delusion for another; and the latter is worse than the former. For wherein few could persuade themselves that the benefits of communion with Christ would come by birth, many may be persuaded that they come through baptism. But both these are conclusions contradicted by the Scriptures. For the Apostle John says of Christ, “As many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Then this relation to Christ is not by birth; nor is it by baptism. “For in Christ Jesus,” says the Apostle Paul, “neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.” It is true that he says, “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.” But again he says, “If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things have passed away, and behold all things have become new.” So that while on the one hand the Gospel is universal in its offers, on the other hand its accept-

ance must be individual. Two things perfectly consistent. No man, then, is admitted as a member of the body of Christ, unless he has undergone a personal and radical change,—been born again, and so passed from death unto life,—a life by faith; which great change does not pass upon men in communities, but as individuals. Woe, then, to the church that admits to its fellowship men that have not this title to it. Woe, woe, to those who admit them wittingly. For, “if any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” And the temple of God is the body of Christ,—every member of which must be holy as the head.

2nd. *This relation is of all things most to be desired.*

If we press this upon men of the world, that have their portion in this life, either they refuse to think at all, treat it as an idle tale, so that it is all one whether they admit or deny it; or if they think, they reply, “What is the necessity for this close relationship to Christ? and what its advantage? To obtain it, we must give up many pleasures that we now enjoy: and what profit shall we have in place of them? And as God is merciful, surely, if we mean well, and endeavour to do it, he will have mercy upon us.” And if they are moral, and know the Scriptures, they will say, Is it not written by his inspiration, “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” They are willingly unmindful

of this, that when the Lord has required them to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, they have refused; and that when he has required them to love the Lord Jesus Christ, they have refused; and they pretend to walk humbly with their God. Surely this is to be hardened rather than to be humbled; and such have a poor plea for mercy. Children of disobedience are, by nature, and of necessity, children of wrath. But you, brethren beloved, will not ask any such questions. You know the pleasures as well as the profit of being in Christ. You are acquainted with and acknowledge its manifold advantages. Therefore I do not speak of these things to you, "because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it." And this because "though ye know them, and be established in the present truth, it is meet to stir you up by putting you in remembrance."— You know that this relationship, and it alone, can deliver you from the condemnation, the awful and endless condemnation, due to all men, as children of disobedience. You know that it alone can deliver you from darkness, and translate you into the kingdom of God's dear Son. You know that it alone can constitute you a child and an heir of God, insuring you his grace and his glory. You know that it alone can make you rejoice in an unseen Saviour, with joy unspeakable and full of glory; triumphing over all the sorrows of time and all the temptations of earth, and anticipating the happiness of heaven itself. You know, in a word, that it alone can cancel the evil past, keep now in the fear and favour of God, and insure a thrice-blessed future—

an eternity of bliss. Therefore you admit that it is to be coveted above all things ; and that Christ is all, and in all to his body—the Church Great, then, are the claims of Christ ;—none so great. Yet many are the claims that rival his while we remain in this world ; and we are all very apt to yield to them. But, to correct and overcome this evil inclination, we should fully possess our soul with the blessedness of being in Christ, whereby all things, both present and to come, are ours ; ~~and~~ from whose love nothing can possibly separate us ; for we should forsake all and follow him, when we found the vanity of all else in comparison with him. And what, indeed, could bear comparison with Him who only has the words of eternal life ? Surely, as He is the greatest and the best of beings, a living and everlasting union with him is the greatest and the best of blessings.

3rd. *This relation is attainable by every man.*

Which remark I make, dear brethren, at once for your encouragement and for your instruction. Some of you may be anxiously questioning whether you are members of Christ ; when, being really such, you need not be perplexed about it. And some may fear to urge others to become so, lest you should be provoking them to what is not in their power. Therefore, for full assurance in both cases, consider well our present assertion, that this relation, so desirable for all, is attainable by all. But how can this be ? Have we not said that nothing less than an essential, absolute, and entire change in a man, can constitute him a member of Christ ;—a change so great as to be called a transition from death unto life ? ~~we~~

have. And so it is. Well, then, is that in a man's own power? In one sense it is not; but in another it is. He cannot effect it; but he can attain it. And can he have full proof that he has experienced this change? He can, and ought. What is the difference between a dead and a living man? A spirit dwells in the one and not in the other. And so it is in the things of which we now speak. "The Spirit giveth life." According to the analogy which is most perfect, the Spirit of Christ must pervade every part of the body of Christ. Just as any member, separated from the body, would be instantly and inevitably dead; so any one, though called a member of Christ, must perish if not possessed by his Spirit. For the unqualified declaration of the inspired author of our text is: "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." Again, how does a man know and prove that he is alive? He thinks, he speaks, he acts, just as the living do; and the dead cannot. Thus he has and gives incontrovertible evidence. So the Spirit of Christ gives the evidence wherever he quickens. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance." Wherever this fruit is, there must the Spirit be. And wherever it is not, He is not. Its production is the proof of His indwelling. Therefore should no one be satisfied that he lives in the Spirit, unless by these he walks in the Spirit. And so if there be not that fruit, and so not that Spirit, what can be done? Can the dead quicken himself; or any man give life to his fellow-men? No. But let that man seek the in-

fluence of the Spirit, and so secure its effect. And this the very dead in sins may do. For the Redeemer has said : "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" An argument full of grace and truth ; which leaves those who hear the Gospel and heed it not without excuse. Then mark these two other declarations of your Lord : "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth ; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." And again : "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." In the one case, you see, he plainly teaches us to ask the grace that bringeth salvation from him ; in the other, he as plainly teaches us to ascribe the glory of it to God, who only can quicken, and quickens whom he will. Therefore, let any man heartily come to the Son of God, and seek the Spirit of God, and he will, as there is truth in the words of the faithful and true Witness, he will become a member of the body of Christ. Wherefore we frequently cry in the ears of this congregation : "Awake, thou that sleepeth ; and arise from the dead ; and Christ shall give thee light."

There is just one more remark that I would make in reference to this fundamental point in the polity of the church.

4th. *This relation involves relative duties.*

"All members have not the same office," says the Apostle. That is a distinct and definite fact ;

—a fact which it would be well for some in these last days to remember; apparently unnecessary to be asserted, yet actually necessary. It is intended, however, to teach another fact, which is that—all members have some office. There are some parts in the human body (the figure in the text), the functions of which men of science have not yet ascertained. But do they, therefore, say that these parts are of no use? No. That were not in accordance with a sound philosophy. They say that they must have some purpose, though it is difficult to discover it, as the examination cannot be carried on until the operation has ceased; since the internal structure and economy can be investigated only by the anatomist, who has to do but with a corpse, not with a man. In like manner, we conclude that every individual member of the body of Christ has an appropriate function, which it will discharge as long as it is in health; whether known or unknown to outward observers. We have “gifts differing according to the grace that is given unto us;” but none are altogether destitute of gifts, though they may be few and small. The body of Christ is a perfect thing. In it there can be nothing deficient, nothing superfluous. He is “the head, from which all the body by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.” And the increase of God can only be that which will tend to the absolute perfection of the whole. In exact accordance with this line of argument, the Apostle says: “For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to *himself*. For whether we live, we live unto the

Lord ; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord : whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." This is Christ's object respecting all his members. And this should be the object of all his members in reference to Christ ; to which every disposition and every purpose should be subject. His Spirit should animate and actuate all that are his. The purity of the individual members, and the perfection of the whole body should be the ardent and constant desire, and, in some way or other, the endeavour of all that name the name of Christ. So then this relation involves imperative duties ; some belonging to all the members in common, which class it is our present purpose to illustrate and enforce ; and others belonging to individual members in particular. But it may be asked respecting the latter : Is it possible to discover the appropriate function of every member ? It is. The rule is simple and certain. Each member of Christ, feeling the sympathy that should be found in all, should do all that he has capacity and opportunity to do for the glory of his Master in the good of men. I repeat it : Each member of Christ should do all that he has capacity and opportunity to do for the glory of his Master in the good of men. Nothing more is required ; and nothing less. But again it may be asked : Will not this exceeding broad rule lead to much presumption ? It may, but ought not. And to counteract any such tendency, we would add the words of the Apostle which go before our text : "I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he

ought to think ; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." This then is the rule by which Christian duty is to be measured by an enlightened conscience :—a rule that admits neither exception nor excuse. And so you see what it is to belong to the body of Christ. Now, having thus set forth the relation which we sustain towards the Head of the Church, we pass on to consider :

II. OUR RELATION TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH.

"And every one members one of another." Unity is the great law of all being. The Creator has impressed that Divine attribute upon the whole of his creation. It is seen in the vast universe ;—in each separate system ;—in this world of ours ;—in each kingdom of nature ;—in every nation,—family,—man. And we have just seen that over and above this unity, common to the whole and the separate parts of creation, there is another most striking instance of it, which we could not have expected, could not have imagined,—"a new creation ;"—"we are one body in Christ." A unity effected by the blending of those created with the "Uncreate" himself! A mystery! wonderfully typified in the person of Jesus,—Immanuel,—God with us,—God manifest in the flesh.

"From different natures marvellously mixed ;
Connexion exquisite of distant worlds!"

Well might heaven and earth be all amazement at such a unity. Yet so it is. "Ye are the

body of Christ!" That we should never have expected. But, being assured of that, we might expect what follows : "and members in particular;" or as we have it in our text : "and every one members one of another." Here, then, we have a new relation among men, arising from their relation to their common Lord and Master, And both rest upon the same authority. In reference to this letter we have three points on which to remark.

1st. *Its universality.* "Every one members one of another."

This sentence, of course, is qualified by the former; so that those only who are of the body of Christ are in this sense members one of another. The universality is not absolute, but relative,—has reference to the church exclusively; by which I mean the whole body of believers in Jesus. In a sense all men are members one of another, so as to have a claim upon each other for kindly offices, and all the tender charities of life. But the intimate relation intended in the text subsists not without the pale of the church. It cannot subsist even between those who are within and those who are without: "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?" asks the Apostle; "or what connexion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" The pen of inspiration always draws a broad line of difference between those who are, and those who are not Christ's. But between those who are his it puts none,—permits none. It says: "There is neither

Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." As for rich and poor, it scarcely notices such a distinction, except just to warn the rich on no account to despise the poor, and to introduce the general charge: "Have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect to persons." The only respect which it permits is that more abundant honour should be bestowed on any member that, from outward circumstances, may seem less honourable.

Here then you have the absolute law of Christ's kingdom. All its children, without exception,—pastors and people, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, masters and servants,—are brethren; enjoying equal privileges and entitled to equal respect as such; are yet more intimately connected, "members one of another," and so "one in Christ Jesus." Whoever is a member of Christ, is also a member of all that are Christ's, and has them all for members. Where then is pride? It is excluded from the church of Christ by its very constitution. But has there not been more pride in "the Church" than in the world itself? Indeed it is too true. But mark whence that has arisen. Men have given the Church a new constitution; and it has generated that evil principle. They have willingly forgotten their equality with, and their dependence upon, each other. Then the wealthy and the crafty have set up for "lords over God's heritage," rulers by a Divine right. And then there has been a strife among them which of them should be the greatest. And pride has been *the parent of incalculable evil.* But let the con-



stitution which Christ has given to his Church but be duly observed and acted out, and the actual relation between all its members will be evident; not indeed in the uniformity which some men would desire, but in the unity which the Head has dictated to them all. Then all his converts will be as little children,—full of affection and humility.

Having thus marked the universality of this relation, we now notice,

2nd. *Its intention*

India, my brethren, is a type of the world. And the Hindoos (marvel not at this!) are a type of the Church. I mean not the inward and spiritual Church spoken of in my text, but the outward and visible Church in the midst of the world. The system of castes prevails everywhere. The whole family of man is split up into classes. Various are the grounds of classification; power, wealth, influence, talent, and so forth. But each of these widely separated men from their fellow-men. "Every man in his own order," would seem to be the world's motto; and,—those who have read ecclesiastical history, or marked the signs of the times, will say,—the motto of the Church too. This rule had its rise among the ministry, who established what they call "orders;" of course with powers and revenues to distinguish the one order from another. It quickly spread among the people also. And soon all the distinctions of the world came into the Church. This then is a most natural system. But our text aims one great blow at its root, by which it all falls to the ground. It brings every man in the Church to

his own level;—aye more, to the level of every other in the Church. But this is the thing that the natural man so hates. Why then is this violence done to our nature? Not without a purpose,—a great and a gracious purpose. We are told that we are “every one members one of another;” to excite and sustain us in that sympathy for each other which Christ, our Head, felt for us all. A man may be unmoved by the severest pain in a fellow-man, though told that he is his brother. But if he has the slightest pain in his hand, his foot, his eye, or his tooth, he cannot despise it. It has a tongue that speaks to his inmost soul, and will be heard,—calls for relief, and will be attended to. And if, on the other hand, his eye drinks in beauty, or his ear melody, or his mouth sweetness, his heart is gladdened. In the words of the great Apostle: “Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.” So should it be with you, my brethren, with all of you; for “ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”

Such is in few words the intention of this relation. Now notice lastly

3rd. *Its responsibility.*

God has made nothing, and has done nothing in vain. And so if in any case his purpose is not accomplished, or his design is frustrated, evil is the inevitable consequence. If any member of the body refuses to let the stream of life pass through it, and to perform its function, it is cut off or taken out, lest it should spread death

through the system. In the like manner if it is said by the Head to any member of the Church: "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead;" he must repent quickly, or will certainly be separated for ever from the body of Christ. For our Lord himself has said, in a parable exactly parallel with our text, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, my Father taketh away." And what is the required fruit? Faith which worketh by love,—ardent love towards Him, and active love towards all that are His. This Christ claims from all his members, and claims for all his members. And we must honour, or he will vindicate that claim. Thus you see from the text, brethren beloved, the twofold relation which you bear, and which you have to prove,—to Christ, and to all true Christians.

In conclusion let me just ask two questions of all this congregation :

Are you members of the body of Christ?

Do you act as members of Christ and one of another?

Consider these questions, and may the Lord grant you grace to answer: Yea. Yea.

MUTUAL LOVE.

“The Church.”—How different, how opposite are the thoughts which that expression awakens in the minds of those who hear it. To some it gives an idea of inextricable complexity;—to others the idea of admirable simplicity.—There is a church in alliance with the thrones of earth, which must therefore have its lords, and they, of course, their servants:—many are its gradations, and various its relations. And there is a church, the alliance of which is with the throne of heaven; before which there is no respect of persons. Some call a building in which men may worship God, “the Church:” but others apply the term only to a body of men that worship Him in spirit and in truth. The former usage is confessedly not Scriptural, and is certainly not expedient; the latter is both. Adopting it, the Church is, to my mind, the most simple thing. On the last Lord’s day I unfolded the concise, but complete definition of it: “We, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” What could be more simple? Nothing, surely, when it is thus divested of all the human conceit and earthly connexions which have been gathered around and heaped upon it. That then is the

church ;—a body characterized by the absolute unity among its members, and between its members and its Head. That is “the general assembly and church,” in all countries and ages, on earth and in heaven. To it every converted man comes by his new birth. And to it no others can ever come.—That definition is also an appropriate expression for each generation of the church while in the world. It also is a simple, spiritual thing. This one Church, however, in order to be visible, becomes many. So that we read in this Book of “the churches,”—“the churches of God,”—“the churches of Christ,”—and “the churches of the saints :” each of these being a distinct and independent society, or body, of those exclusively who profess to believe in Christ. In the very nature of things it is impossible for all the church to meet in one place. It meets, therefore, in several places. And each of its assemblies is a church. These churches are not so absolutely simple as the one spiritual church ;—cannot be. There are some earthly elements in them. And so some of the members hold offices not common to all the members ;—offices which they do not take upon themselves, but which are conferred upon them by the church in which they hold them.—Some men, indeed, object to even this admixture of the earthly with the spiritual,—professedly dispense with it, though they cannot practically. We, however, are not careful to coincide with them in their impracticable principle, because the inspired Apostle sanctions and so establishes this constitution of churches, when he says: “Paul and

Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons, &c.," and then designates these collectively a church. The duty of the bishops (which you know to be but another name for the pastors and teachers), was to attend to the spiritual, and of the deacons to attend to the temporal concerns of the church. Which two offices we hope hereafter to explain and establish among you. But now we remark that to the whole assembly, without distinction, belonged the declaration : "We, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." And just such an assembly is this church. Wherefore I purpose in these discourses to speak to you, not of the duties which devolve on your pastor or your deacons in particular, but of those which belong to us all in common ;—

MUTUAL CHRISTIAN DUTIES.

Foremost among these, and at the foundation of them all, is Love.

Therefore our exhortation to you to-day will be founded upon that of the Apostle Peter :

"See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently."—1 Peter, i. 22.

This kindly affection one to another is a subject to which I have frequently directed the attention of this congregation. But if any think I do so too frequently, my apology is found in the first epistle of the beloved disciple, and in the last words of his loving Master recorded in his

Gospel. But I believe that those who have the feeling will never be displeased by a fresh reference to it, and so will ask no apology. Therefore since we are not yet "made perfect in love," let us again give to it our deliberate and devout consideration; dividing the subject into three parts; the arguments in favour of the mutual love of Christians,—the evidences of its existence,—and the advantages which result from it.

I.—CHRISTIAN LOVE IS A REASONABLE FEELING.

The second great commandment of the laws of every dispensation is very broad: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." For every man is neighbour to every other man in this sense, as proved by the parable of the good Samaritan. Thus strong then is our affection to be to the extent of a circle inclusive of the whole human race. Within this circle, however, there are others, smaller and yet deeper;—those of benefaction, friendship, and family. Distinct from all these there is that of which we are now speaking; within which our affection should be superior in kind and in degree, being constituted both of the natural and of the spiritual, both of the earthly and of the heavenly. Our first argument in its favour is—

1st. It is the commandment of God and Christ.

We have a twofold injunction to this effect in that passage of the Apostle John: "This is God's commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment." Here you see that the Father and Son unitedly inculcate what, in

many places, they separately enjoin. And the simple fact, that it is the injunction of the only wise God our Saviour, affords sufficient reasons for our obedience to it. He has a right to enjoin anything upon us; and everything that he enjoins upon us must be right. Our obligations to him are numberless; and our confidence in him ought to be boundless. The Father gave us life and all its blessings; and the Son by his own death redeemed our life, and rendered it doubly blessed, and endlessly blessed. Surely, then, we ought gladly to comply with any requirement of the Father and the Son; and the more in this case, because we have professed to do so, according to the verse of our text, which speaks thus to us:—“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren; see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.” Consistency then demands obedience to our Saviour in this matter.

Another argument in its favour, kindred to this, is,—

2nd. *It is the evidence of relation to God and Christ.*

A most impressive exhortation is that of the Apostle John. “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God.” And it ought to be most powerful in those to whom it speaks as unto brethren,—children of the one great Father, whose name is Love. Their likeness to him is the chief glory of the saints in heaven; and ought to be the great desire of those on earth. *And as love is the most prominent feature*

in his character, it ought to be in their's, that they may be assuredly and evidently the children of their Father who is in heaven. Wherefore we have as an argument the words following our text; "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." And well is this argument sustained by the charge of our Divine Redeemer. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." A commandment at once illustrated and established by his own love. Wherefore, those who assert that He is their Master, should give this proof that they are his disciples. The exercise of this one principle is the evidence of being a friend of Christ and a child of God. Whereas, its absence is the evidence that these relations do not subsist. Well, therefore, may his ministers enjoin it upon his people. And this, again, because

3rd. *It is the pledge of the glory of God and Christ, and preparation for it.*

"Love is the fulfilling of the law," says the Apostle Paul, in accordance with the teaching of his Master. That love has a twofold object,—God and man; but is essentially one. And that law comes from heaven to fit men for heaven, making them like God here, that they may live with God hereafter. Now, however, this pure love is not innate in man, is not natural to our world. The earthly has subdued, has superseded the heavenly. The existence therefore of the

heavenly in any one is now the evidence of a change, a conversion, a new creation ; which is the work of that Spirit, whose fruit is love. Even as the Apostle John says, "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." Great are the privileges, and bright are the prospects of those who live and walk in the Spirit ; which is to them the earnest of the heavenly inheritance, until the actual redemption of the possession already purchased. And these are the privileges and prospects of those who show that they love God by loving one another. Peace on earth is theirs ; and theirs will be perfection in heaven.

The mutual love of the brethren in Christ then, in whatever aspect viewed, is a reasonable feeling. But we must go on to mark another feature in it.

II. CHRISTIAN LOVE IS A PRACTICAL FEELING.

The expression of the text, "Love one another with a pure heart fervently," is very emphatic. It indicates great strength in the tie that binds together those who are Christian brethren, not in name, but in deed. Theirs is no ordinary, no earthly love. Dictated by revelation, it is directed by reason. It is not a passion, but a principle,—a strong and steady principle. Dependent upon character, it is independent of circumstances. Its existence at least is, though its exercise cannot be altogether independent of circumstances.

To show that it is a practical feeling I would just make two remarks:—

1st. *It must be seated in the heart.*

Of the men of ancient Israel the Lord said,—“With their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after much covetousness.” But he despised, he refused such love; and he ever will; for as a man thinketh and feeleth in his heart, so is he before God. And what our heavenly Father despises for himself, he despairs for his children. He will not accept a cold or a calculating affection for himself, nor will he for them. In either case, the charge is, “Let love be without dissimulation.” They may be deceived by a mere profession; and often are. He never is, nor can be. Wherefore the mutual affection of the children of God must arise and abide in the heart; where it must be unmixed and unmeasured, sincere and ardent,—inferior only to their love for their common Father. And the affection expressed towards the whole body of Christ must be cherished towards each individual member of that body;—the same in kind to every one, though not the same in degree. Like their Lord they must love all his disciples, though as he did, they may love one more than the rest; especially if it be for the same reason,—the greatest resemblance to the Lord himself. But it must ever be in the heart, pure and fervent. Yet this is not all; there is another point involved, though not expressed in this.

2nd. *It must be shown in the life.*

“God is love,” is the repeated assertion of the Apostle John. And the proofs of its truth are

within and without us,—above, beneath, around us,—in the kingdom of nature ; and yet more, far more, in that of grace—every where. Every man among us, and especially every Christian man, is a living evidence of the love of God. “Christ also hath loved us,” says the Apostle Paul, adding the proof, “and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.” Than which there could not be a greater proof. So you see that the love of God our Saviour is an active feeling, at once averting evil and effecting good. And as is the love of God, so must be that of those that are God’s. His inspired servant gives us the unqualified charge: “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love ; in honour preferring one another.” And Paul himself affords us an illustrious example of the practical feeling so frequently inculcated by him, saying to the church of the Thessalonians,—“So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.” We are not under the necessity of making the sacrifices which he made in proof of love to the brethren ; but we have the opportunity of doing them many services,—ministering to their temporal and their spiritual interests. And if we do not take these opportunities, we prove that we do not love them, and so possess not the love of God. “For he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen ?”

We cannot now go into the expressions and

evidences of love. But you have a most admirable digest of them in the thirteenth chapter of St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians; an unrivalled eulogium upon this greatest of Christian graces, which makes man like his God. It is a beautiful picture. There is nothing of sentimentalism,—all sincerity in it. Blessed is the man of whose character it is the representation. My beloved brethren, let that blessedness be yours. But to this end you must ever remember that love is a practical feeling, proceeding from the heart and proved in the life. And remember that God your Saviour requires and will reward "the work and labour of love shown to him, in ministering to his saints."

There is yet another aspect in which we must regard it.

III. CHRISTIAN LOVE IS A BENEFICIAL FEELING.

"None is good save one, that is God." There is a great truth, and a great foundation for other truths. And this book establishes it. For it contains many injunctions, ordinances, statutes, and commandments, which are severally the evidences of it. Every one of them not only being good, but also intending good; which is the one object of his every enactment. Men may make laws just for the sake of legislating, out of the pride of power. God never does.—Our text is an instance in point. It absolutely requires Christian love from all Christian men, and two or three remarks will shew that what it requires is a good thing.

1st. *It gives happiness to its objects.*

God the Creator has made men very dependent

upon each other for the happiness so much desired by all, and made it to depend, for the most part, upon little things. Moreover, the more effectually to promote the happiness of his children, he has bound them together in the one body of Christ. This, his object, therefore, ought to be theirs.— Since the relationship which he has established between them all is the closest possible,—actual unity,—that they might be spontaneously and irresistibly inclined to advance it. And many are the ways in which Christians may contribute to the happiness of each other in this house of their pilgrimage—this world of affliction and adversity. The benevolent heart will devise means of doing so, though it may not be allied with a bounteous hand, as it should ever be when possible. Generous actions may be done by those who have no wealth. Kindly words may be spoken by those who have no power. All can “weep with those that weep, and rejoice with them that do rejoice,” and all ought to do so; for this would divide the sorrows, and double the joys of their brethren.

During the past week I received one of the most grateful letters that I have ever read, from an individual for whom I have done nothing but speak sober words of Christian kindness in the time of her affliction. I could do nothing else: except, indeed, as she says,— She knows, she feels that I have prayed for her. These things at least you may all do, and by them give great happiness. But this is the result of the exercise of Christian love not only to its objects?

2nd. *It yields satisfaction to its subjects.*

“Love seeketh not her own.”—That is a fact. Yet it is also a fact, that she finds that which she followed not after. Labouring for the profit of others, she most effectually secures her own pleasure. Common benevolence entails blessedness on those who cherish and practice it. Much more does Christian benevolence. I say, much more does Christian benevolence; because it is not a feeling only, but a principle also. Its very existence is a source of pleasure, known only to those who feel it. And its exercise is doubly so. Its every act may be regarded as done unto Him to whom so much is due from us;—a sacrifice and service of faith acceptable to Christ himself. And it is done “as to the Lord and not to men; knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord whether he be bond or free.”—There is on many accounts, my dear brethren, a sweet, a sacred satisfaction in doing good, or even if that cannot be, in wishing well to any man, and specially a Christian man—a brother of the same blood-bought family—a fellow-member of the same holy and heavenly body. And such Christian love is beneficial. Once more:

3rd. *It advances the glory of Christ in the good of his people.*

The more his disciples cherish this affection for each other, the more they prove and perfect their affection to Him. That is the link binding them together as brethren. The more they love their fellow-members, the more anxious will they be that those who are without may be brought within the body of Christ. The more each perceives

of the love of Christ in others, the stronger and the closer will his attachment to the head and the members become. And unconverted men will be attracted to Christ, when constrained to say: "See how these Christians love." In a word, gratitude and devotedness to Christ would be excited without, as well as within the church, by the appropriate manifestations of Christian love.

On all these accounts we have desired to impress upon you, dear brethren, the exhortation:—"See that you love one another with a pure heart fervently."

Such is the unqualified rule of Christian affection, addressed to all the members of the body of Christ on behalf of all. But experience prompts two remarks more:

Love to any particular Church must not exclude love to the universal Church.

That were mere party spirit:—a thing quite contrary to the broad principle of the text, and to the very genius of the Gospel.—A man may be a most zealous member of any Christian communion, even the purest, and a great lover of all that belong to the same communion, just upon the principle that binds him to his political party,—the similarity of their sentiments and his own being the bond;—and then flatter himself that this sectarianism is Christian love. But it is not. That is a far higher and nobler affection. A Christian's sympathies must extend to all that "hold the head,"—must embrace all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both

theirs and ours,—or he is not worthy of Christ. Christianity should be the bond of union between all true Christians. But again,

Love to the Universal Church must include love to some particular Church.

There are, and must be, many churches in the one. Situation will divide it into different assemblies. Sentiments also have divided it; and will, I believe, as long as earth is its abode.—We may deplore this; though there is not much reason to do so. But there it is:—an evil it may be; but if so, an evil to be overcome. And as, without controversy, every Christian is bound, if possible, to unite with some Christian assembly, each should unite with that the views of whose members most coincide with his own; that is, with those which he believes to be contained in the oracles of God. Then the place of their assembly should be the centre, though not the circumference, of his affections. And they should be well exercised within the circle of that society, that they may be strong to extend beyond it, and embrace all within the circle of the one great Church.—There are some, however, whose love disdains any such centre,—spreads itself at once over the whole Church. Their affections belong to the body of Christ, and not to his members. Their soul is too large to love anything less than the whole, even as a part of the whole. But if asked to characterize their conceit, I should term it “Philosophy, falsely so called.” For it certainly is nothing better;—it is not religion. They remind me of a gentleman in the metropolis, who is often solicited for contributions to religious

objects, being a very wealthy man, and a regular hearer of the Gospel, but has one answer for all applicants: "I have really so many calls of the kind, I cannot give anything to this case." For they extend their love so very widely, that it all evaporates without any one feeling its good effects. My inquiry from such would be: "He that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love his brethren, whom he hath not seen?" My advice to such would be: "First learn to shew pity at home." And as for you, my beloved brethren, would you attain an unfeigned affection for all that love our Lord Jesus Christ, (an attainment to which I shall ever provoke you,) as the best means to that great end: — "*See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.*"

MUTUAL CARE.

1 Cor. xii. 25.

"The members should have the same care one for another."

It is one of the peculiarities of the Book of Inspiration, that its revelations are ever fresh: apart from the fanciful expositions which some love so much. Their interest deepens as our examination deepens. Some who think but little of it, may soon tire of it; but those who know most of it, never do. For the more we reflect on them, the more beautiful and impressive do its illustrations become. This is strikingly the case with the figure of which our text forms a part; as you will readily admit if you have wisely read for yourselves the chapter from which it is taken, since it was read in this place in your hearing. "The Church, which is Christ's body," is a peculiarly apposite figure, the most apposite expression of what the Church is and ought to appear. Had it been evidently realized from the time at which Christ established his Church in the world, I firmly believe that before this the whole world would have rejoiced in his redemption, and sub-

mitted to his sway. Had the children of the Church but "kept the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace;" so that there had manifestly been "one body and one Spirit, even as they are called in one hope of their calling;" its influence must have been irresistible. That body, in its perfection as a whole, and in that of its several parts, had been a sight too lovely not to be loved by most, if not by all men. But the schisms in the body have greatly retarded, though they may in some ways have advanced its growth.

We have already unfolded the figure in its general import. But we have to-day to consider a particular aspect of it,—the sympathy that ought to subsist between the individuals composing this mystic body. That is now our subject. A subject of deepest interest to this church and congregation. For if the duty inculcated in the text were observed by all this Church it would soon have accessions from the Congregation: "So good and so pleasant is it for brethren to dwell together in unity." Then consider diligently, beloved brethren, the assertion of the Apostle, which he transfers from the natural to the mystical body; and which is incontrovertible in the one case as in the other: "The members should have the same care one for another." And it will suggest two inquiries:

I.—WHAT ARE THE OBJECTS OF THIS CARE?

That was a wonderful answer that Jesus gave to Satan: "It is written, that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." And *this* true. Every word of God does contribute

to the perfection of those who heed what they hear from Him. Therefore we do well in our meditations upon this book to consider and to compare the very words of it, and not to be satisfied when we fancy that we have gained the sentiments of the writer. This rule may be carried out too far. But it is generally applicable ; and particularly so to our text. This expression, "have care," may seem to imply very little. Comparison, however, will prove that it implies very much. The original word is the one employed by our Lord in the 6th of Matthew, and in the 13th of Luke, in which he strongly forbids "thought" about the life or the body ;—and in his reproof of Martha, because she was "careful and troubled about many things." The Apostle Paul says : "Be careful for nothing." And the Apostle Peter says in a parallel passage : "Casting all your care upon God ; for he careth for you." So then, that which is enjoined in our text, is forbidden in many other passages ? It is. But mark the difference between them and this,—a real and a great difference. In them it is forbidden in reference to ourselves. In this it is enjoined in reference to others. The great principle of the text therefore is, that we may have, ought to have, in some respects, a greater care for our fellow-members than for ourselves. To what then should this care for them have reference ?

1st. *Their prosperity.*

This is a large expression, including every thing that can contribute to their happiness,—things great and small. For we do well ever to remember that "little things are great to little

men :" a truth of which reflection upon ourselves will at once assure us. All these things then should be our care one for another. That was a noble sentiment of one of the Romans, and reasonable too : " I am a man ; and nothing which concerns man is of unconcern to me." But yet more noble and reasonable were it for us to say : " I am a Christian ; and I am interested in every thing that interests a Christian." For nearer and dearer is this relationship than that. And this must be our principle would we obey and imitate our Master. " For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ;" but one " who in all things was made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest :" who, while he dwelt on earth, " went about doing good,"—dissipating sorrow and extending happiness in various ways, and especially among the humblest of men. Such should be our conduct as far as possible towards all men, especially towards Christian men ; and above all (mark this!) towards those brethren, who, being united to us in church-fellowship, are made by our Master particularly dependent upon our sympathies and our succour. What he performed we must not neglect, if it be in our power : and those whom he despairs not, we must not despise.—There are Christian brethren who have special care for those who are in prosperity—a very worldly principle. It must not be so with you, dear brethren. Let your special care be for those who are in adversity : a right Christian, a heavenly principle. In your *obedience to the text*, " mind not high things, but

condescend to men of low estate." For while you do well to "rejoice with them that do rejoice," you do better to "weep with them that weep," particularly if you can at all remove the cause of their grief. Then ever remember the words of the wise man, true in so many respects: "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting,"—a truth approved by the practice of our Lord, and so commended to all that call him Lord. Have care, then, dear brethren, for whatever may in any way insure the prosperity of each other, knowing that, whether high or low in the world, in the church you are members one of another, equal and essential to each other. Again, your care for your fellow-members must concern,

2nd. *Their reputation.*

Some men are exceedingly sensitive upon this point. That is not well; for it mostly results from vanity, and produces vexation of spirit. A man's character ought to be dearer to him than any earthly good. But understand by this, not what others declare him to be, but what he actually is. However, "a good name" is a real good,—not to be despised, but greatly to be desired,—"rather to be chosen than great riches." There are some things to be preferred to it; but it is to be preferred to most things: and this is especially the case with the Christian; because, as his professions are high, his consistency ought to be great; and in his case, it is especially good, in itself and in its influence:—his honour in some measure involving that of his master. But here the principle already laid down applies. On this

point we should be more careful for our fellow-members than for ourselves. Even according to the apostolic injunction : " Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love ; in honour preferring one another." Wherefore, while having a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men, we may be little anxious about our own reputation, we should be very jealous for that of our brethren and fellow-members. We should by all means, as far as possible, vindicate their character, and especially their Christian character, from every aspersion cast upon it ; resisting not only open calumny, but also silent contempt ; and this not only with those who are personal friends in private life, but with all ; bearing in mind this rule, based upon the beautiful analogy traced by the Apostle between the natural and the mystical body : " Those members of the body which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour." But understand that passage well. The term "honourable" refers in it to condition, and not to character. If any member really is not honourable, that is, is not a consistent Christian, we should reprove his conduct ; and if that avails not, report him to the church ; and, if then he continues inconsistent, reject him from our communion. Thus we must dishonour, rather than honour such a man. But, on the contrary, if worldly principles might lead us to think little of a brother because destitute of wealth, power, learning, or genius, Christian principles must lead us to think the more of him ourselves, and be the more careful for his honour among

others who may yet be influenced by these principles, though they profess them. Thus should the reputation of our brethren be a care to us; and also,

3rd. *Their edification.*

This is one great end for which Christ has established his Church in the world. Therefore, the Apostle says of his true ministers, "We do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying;" and not only so, but to all his true disciples, the same Apostle says, "Let all things be done unto edifying." That charge belongs to you all, members of the Church of Christ. It applied originally and especially to the public engagements of religion; but applies also to the private intercourse of Christians. It is a universal rule of mutual Christianity. Then let this be your constant care one for another. Let no man among you think that he stands alone, altogether independent of his brethren. If you are in the body of Christ, you are not the body, but a member, more or less honourable, but only a member, bound by the closest possible connexion to your fellow-members, and under the strongest possible obligations to seek the good of the whole body in the perfection of each part. "Well, very true," you may say; "but that has been insisted on already at length." That, then, is what I want you to remember; not only while I am preaching, but in your daily practice.—Contemplate the great purpose of your Master: "Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it

should be holy, and without blemish." Mark well those words; for they were written for our instruction. Every member of the body should, in some sense, participate in that purpose of the Head. We all should endeavour to advance his design. And we may,—we all may do so in some degree. But herein there is a difference from the preceding points. The principle applied to them is not applicable to this. In temporal things we should prefer our fellow-members to ourselves; but in spiritual things we must prefer ourselves to them. We must first build up ourselves on our most holy faith, and then build up our brethren: for those who are not edified cannot edify others. Hence it is that no amount of property or power whatever would secure for a man, evidently destitute of personal piety, a pastorate in any of our churches; for every candidate must make a direct and decided profession of it, or our ministry is closed against him. We have no hope that the blessing of God will attend a teacher who teaches not himself, but needs to be taught which be the first principles of the oracles of God; or a preacher that preaches not to himself the Gospel in its freeness and its power. We believe that "if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch;" and that as for them that see they can get on better without any guide than with a blind one. Such is the rule. Through the mercy of God there have been exceptions. Some castaways have preached to the conversion of some of their hearers. But we have no right to expect exceptions to an established rule. There is a great truth in the title of a sermon published

some years since by Dr. Reed, of London : "Eminent piety essential to eminent usefulness :"—a truth of importance not to ministers only, but to all the members of the Church. Then bear that sentence in mind: and though you may never see the sermon, it may be very profitable to you and to many others. First of all, edify yourselves, beloved brethren, and then you can, you will edify one another. This is your duty, and might well be your delight: and these are the objects in reference to which you should, as members one of another, have the same care one for another. Now inquire,

II. WHAT ARE THE PROOFS OF THIS CARE ?

"For he careth for you," says the Apostle Peter to the faithful in Christ Jesus respecting God their Father. And what proofs does he give of his care for us ? We must calculate the sum of our known blessings from our very birth, and add to them an innumerable multitude unknown to us, and then we shall have somewhat of an answer. Every joy of this life, and every hope of that to come, is a proof of his care for us. You will all at once allow this; and in so doing you admit that his care is a practical thing, which is just what I want to impress upon your minds, that I may draw from it the inference that ours must be practical too, would we be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. We must not only profess to desire the prosperity, reputation, and edification of one another ; but, as we have opportunity, give proofs of that desire for the well-being of our brethren. The first of which must be,

1st. The knowledge of their character and circumstances.

"Knowledge is power." That is a very common sentiment ;—approved by most ; but, like all such sentiments, approved by most in principle only, not by practice also. Now if we were to reason together upon the subject of to-day, some of you might say to me, "Well, it is certainly a very proper thing for all Christians to have this care one for another ; and if they have it for the Church universal, they will have it most evidently for their own particular church. But what can we do for any of our fellow-members in this church? We do not know that we can help them in any way." Suppose, then, that I were to ask you, "Do you really know your fellow-members?" Would not some of you give me an answer like this :—"I know such a one,—and such a one,—and such a one,—and I have seen a little of two or three more?" And is that all? Are you little acquainted with the few, and altogether unacquainted with the many? And how do you expect to benefit those of whom you know next to nothing, or really nothing? You do not, cannot expect it. If you required a physician, you would not have one ignorant of your constitution ; or, if compelled to do so, you would give him all possible information before he prescribed for you, that he might not do so at random. And you will allow, if you reflect, that your minister ought not to be ignorant of your moral constitution, nor altogether of your mental and physical constitutions, lest he should not profit you, always preaching at a venture. In like manner, would

you prove your care one for another, you must know the peculiar character and circumstances of each other, that you may best advance the temporal and eternal interests of your brethren. Thus will you be prepared to give the second proof of your care.

2nd. *Assistance in their necessities.*

"Charge them that are rich in this world," said the Apostle to his son Timothy, "that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate ; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." Ah ! some may say, how great is the privilege of the rich in this respect. It is great ; but it is also dear, very dear to most. Eternal life itself is the price of that privilege to most. "For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." And if this privilege of ministering to the necessities of the saints belongs especially to the rich, does it belong exclusively to them ? Have the poor no part in the exhortation : "To do good and to communicate forget not ; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased?" The poorest Christian has a part in it ; and his is this privilege :—"The liberal will devise liberal things." All may do something ; even those that can give nothing. And the one sacrifice is as acceptable to God as the other, if the spirit be the same. If in anything it is true, that "where there is a will there is a way," it is so in Christian benevolence. Your necessities are very different, and your capabilities also. But I question much

whether any of you is destitute of every capability to match the necessities of any other. If any one thinks that he is so, let him tell me, and I will pledge myself to prove the contrary. For it is a fact beyond dispute, that more are the kind offices between the poor themselves, than from the rich to the poor. Therefore, my brethren, employ the opportunities of doing good which God has given you, and you will have no occasion to envy the rich their greater privileges. All of you can in some way, and therefore ought to give this proof of care for your brethren,—assistance in their necessities. Another proof is,

3rd. *The expression of all that is excellent in them.*

Slander is a great evil. Yet it is all but universal in the world; and not altogether unknown in the Church. The ungodly delight especially to defame the godly; because they thus give a double blow,—at the person and at the religion which he professes. Therefore should you double your efforts to defend your brethren against slander in all its forms and modes, even when it is made to seem most candid and most courteous. Let any libel upon a Christian awaken your every energy in his favour, as though you were the counsel for the prosecution of the libeller in a court of law. Be as earnest; while quite honest. And what then, if the accusation be true? It may be so. For no Christian is perfect, most are very imperfect. Then since the charge cannot be overturned, it must be outweighed by better considerations if possible. And every Christian has some excellencies. To assert the contrary, is a

very contradiction in terms. For "if any man be in Christ,"—that is be a Christian,—"he is a new creature,"—“a partaker of the Divine nature.” Therefore we should endeavour to discover all the excellencies belonging to our brethren; and take every proper occasion to declare them. This will at once evince and increase our care for them. The last proof of this that I will mention is,

4th. *Kindly association and counsel.*

There are men that recite a creed every Lord's day, in which they say: “I believe in the communion of saints,” whose faith is founded upon testimony, and not upon experience. They believe in it, because they have been told it, and not because they have tasted it. They may come as the people of God come, sit as the people of God sit, hear his word together with them, and occasionally partake of the same bread and cup with them. But that is all. And that cannot be called the communion of saints, or vast multitudes indeed might profess some fellowship with them. But as it was under the former, so it is under the present dispensation: “Those that fear the Lord, and think upon his name, speak often one to another.” They can say with the Psalmist: “I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.” For they have found by sweet experience that

“The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.”

Feeling the attachment to each other, and the interest in each other, which they profess, they

cannot but seek their society that they may edify one another in love. And their association tends much to their mutual improvement,—to their growth in grace and in the knowledge of their common Lord and Saviour. It also gives them confidence in each other, so that they are able to ask counsel of each other; no longer fearing, through distance or distrust, but being bound together by closer sympathies than can unite strangers. Thus their acquaintance becomes profitable in many ways, as well as very refreshing. Therefore, if we have the mutual care taught in our text, we shall, for our own sake and theirs, seek the company of our brethren in Christ, that we may take sweet counsel together. These, then, are some of the appropriate evidences of this care; to which we might add many more. But let these now suffice. I trust that you all perceive that the analogy employed by the Apostle is a real one, and peculiarly forcible in this particular of the mutual care of the members. Therefore suffer me to urge it upon you, enforcing it, if need be, by two considerations more:

I. BY THIS YOU WILL PROVE THAT YOU ARE MEMBERS OF CHRIST.

The Apostle John says: "If we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." And in other places he makes our love to one another the essential evidence of love to God. So that kindly interest, in which is the proof of kindly affection for those who are Christ's, will be the witness of

your fellowship with God, the Father and the Son. Manifestly having the Spirit of Christ, you will evidently be the members of Christ. Therefore we urge you to this exercise of a Christian spirit ; and, to this end, we add another reason :

II. BY THIS YOU WILL PROFIT FROM BEING MEMBERS OF CHRIST.

This will open to you a wide and good field for the cultivation of all the feelings and affections which distinguished your Master from all men, and ought to distinguish his disciples from all other men ;—those feelings and affections which, being heavenly in their origin, are heavenly in their tendency also. Triumphing over the selfishness innate in man, you will attain an inspired generosity. And thus from day to day, perfecting those principles which only can make meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, you will be constantly pressing forward to it. Ever remember, then, that “ye are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another ;” and that “the members should have the same care one for another.” And at length your Divine Redeemer will say of every proof of your care one for another : “Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.” How full of grace ! and what glory will follow !

MUTUAL PRAYER.

JAMES v. 16.

"Pray one for another."

My brethren, what a mingling of good and evil there is in the present condition of men—of all men. There is ever a struggle, and ever a conflict between them. To be familiar from very infancy with good things—the things that evince the truest dignity of man, and insure for him the highest dignity; how great a good! and yet not only good. It may prove an evil, a great evil; may entail the tremendous 'woe' of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. Since men generally feel those good things the less, the more familiar they are with them. This is true, in some measure, of you, my beloved brethren, upon whom it is my happiness ever to pronounce blessing, and cursing never. Your own experience sustains my argument. Were you to be presented to-morrow at the court of England, you would think very much about it. I question whether you would be able, if willing, to banish it from your mind during *this holy day*. You might sincerely sing:—

"Far from my thoughts, vain world, be gone;
Let my religious hours alone:"

but still would have to sigh over its intrusion into them. To day you have been presented at the court of heaven: and most of you have thought little—some thought nothing about it. This is strange! For what is even the exceeding glory of England to the glory of heaven, which excelleth it—excelleth it far?—of heaven! the throne of the God that has (thrice hallowed be his holy name!) so greatly blessed Britain, making her a queen among the nations? And what is our beloved Queen—though millions of happy subjects do lawful and rightful homage to her—in comparison with the King of kings, and Lord of lords, the only Ruler of princes, who giveth to all life, and breath, and all things? They are not worthy to be compared at all. Yet to-day you have been presented to the living God, not by his ambassador only, but also by the Prince of Life himself—your Saviour; and you have lightly esteemed it. How is this? It arises in a great part, I readily admit, from the difference between faith and sight, but also from familiarity. Prayer is a common thing; or it would appear, what it really is, a most surprising thing, and most sublime. Creatures speaking to their Creator;—men to God;—sinful men to their Saviour God;—grasshoppers, calling Him that sitteth above the circle of the earth, to lend them his ear, while they pour out their hearts before Him! That is most surprising! nevertheless it is a privilege enjoined upon us all. "Men ought always to pray." Supplication for ourselves at such a

throne—the throne of grace and of glory, is a great privilege. But there is a higher, if not a greater—“supplication for all saints.” That belongs to all that are such. That is our theme to-day. We have now to commend to you the inspired charge, “Pray one for another;” which I shall do in few remarks.

I.—MUTUAL CHRISTIAN PRAYER ASSUMES PERSONAL CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

To such as had that character the charge was originally given. It was addressed to “the twelve tribes;” but to them as Israel after the Spirit, as well as after the flesh; to those who still partook of the root and fatness of the olive tree, not to those who were branches broken off because of unbelief. They were not “ignorant of God’s righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, not submitting themselves unto the righteousness of God;” for his servant addressed them as “brethren, having the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.”—Nor can the charge be observed by any, but those who have attained the same character. For mark the encouragement which follows the exhortation: “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” Whose prayer only will be fervent or can be effectual. The ungodly may call upon God, but he will not answer them;—may seek Him early, but they shall not find him. Their prayer is an abomination; though attended by a sacrifice. So the Apostle Paul says: “I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands.” And the Apostle

Peter says, after David : " For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers." In our explanation and appropriation of which passages, we must ever remember that they are accommodated to the present dispensation,—fitted to its genius and scope. We must ever remember, that " Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth." For we must be righteous before God, would we be answered by Him : and we must be in Christ, would we be righteous before God. No supplications can avail now, apart from his sacrifice ; nor can any intercession be profitable, without his intercession, which He will grant to those only who are in Him, and abide in Him,—those who seek and shew his righteousness. So that we, brethren, must be one with the saints in profession ; or we cannot be one with them in prayer, —our prayers cannot benefit ourselves or others. Again :

II. MUTUAL CHRISTIAN PRAYER REQUIRES CHRISTIAN COMMUNION.

Prayer should always have a purpose ; as far as possible, a decided and definite purpose. Without that, it is vanity and a mockery : it can neither please God, nor profit man. Every suppliant ought to adopt the resolution of the Apostle, not only in its original intention, but in its widest sense : " I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also." Heart and mind should both be engaged in this exercise. Surrounded by uncertainties, there must be somewhat of uncertainty about our petitions. But

reason itself would teach that on all accounts there should be the least possible. And on this, among many accounts, we prefer free prayer with its acknowledged defects, to all forms of prayer, however great their admitted excellencies. It is true that our knowledge is very limited, and that of the God with whom we have to do is boundless : so that on the one hand, we need not, and on the other hand, we cannot, fully explain our wants to Him. Yet, without doubt, we need to make them known, as far as we can, when we intreat his attention to them. And as for ourselves, so for others, we ought to regulate our petitions by the individual necessities which we can know. Wherefore, we must acquaint ourselves with the particular circumstances of our brethren, not the outward and visible only, but the inward and spiritual also. Which we cannot do without acquainting ourselves with our brethren themselves. And this we must do, not by an occasional inquiry after their health and prosperity, but by the frequent consideration of the features of their character, and the dispositions of their mind,—even those features and dispositions which are too deeply seated to be discovered by strangers, but which exert a great influence over the individual Christian, over the Christian society with which he is connected, and over general society. Which knowledge is to be gained only from friendship and fellowship ; but is essential wherever attainable. Brotherly intercourse, then, is essential to effectual prayer for our brethren. Again :—

**III. MUTUAL CHRISTIAN PRAYER ARISES FROM,
AND INCREASES CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY.**

If it be sincere and scriptural, that must be its cause, and that its consequence. James Montgomery, one of the simplest and sweetest of Christian poets, well says :

“The Saints in prayer appear as one,
In word, and deed, and mind,
Where with the Father and the Son,
Sweet fellowship they find.”

And they should be what they seem to be. And this, not only when together, but when praying apart. For how otherwise can they hope to insure the favour of God ? In earthly things, we must first be interested in any cause in which we would induce others. We cannot rightly plead what we do not really feel. At any rate, we must evince an interest in order to awaken it. This we may successfully feign to men,—to God we cannot. In heavenly things we must actually feel, or we cannot effectually pray. And this for two reasons,—our own character, and the character of our prayers. For what is the character of the prayer that prevails with God ? “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” That is, the prayer of sympathy. It alone. Another may seem such : but no other is such. Moreover, I have already intimated that the success of supplications to God depends on the personal character of the suppliant. For though God may grant the blessings intreated by the ungodly or the unfeeling, he will not be moved to do so by their intreaties. I refer to it again now, because some might affect Christian character who do not evince Christian sympathy.

But, mark you, while there may be sympathy without Christianity, there can be no real Christianity without real sympathy. The very terms of the Church's constitution involve this. "Ye are every one members one of another." Members of the same body, without sympathy ! It is unnatural. It is impossible. And again, how can there be Christian character, without obedience to Christ ? Yet, this is his commandment: "That ye love one another, as I have loved you." And how did he love you ? Lived and died for you. How then can you expect, that He who did all this for you, and more, "can be touched with a feeling of your infirmities,"—should, as a merciful and faithful High Priest, offer your petitions for those for whom you cherish no sympathy ? You cannot. He will despise and disregard them. The law of kindness must be written on your heart, or the prayer of your lips will not reach to heaven. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem ;" says the Psalmist ; "they shall prosper that love her." Which plainly implies that love to her must dictate the prayer for her. And an advocate who is all sympathy, will not present to the Father supplications, even supplications for the saints, from men who have none. Otherwise he will. And the pure pleasures springing from this great exercise of Christian benevolence will foster the feeling in us. While thus praying, we shall be perfecting our affection for the saints in Christ Jesus : —that which we plead as their title to the Father's regard, being their title to the regard of us, their brethren. So that, on the one hand, none but those who have this Christian sympathy, can truly

pray one for another. And, on the other hand, those who do truly pray one for another, will thereby acquire more and more Christian sympathy. Again :

IV. MUTUAL CHRISTIAN PRAYER SHOULD PRECEDE AND FOLLOW CHRISTIAN EFFORT.

“As we have therefore opportunity,” says the inspired Apostle, “let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” And there is a law in that exhortation, which can never be abrogated while the world stands,—obedience to which must result from real sympathy. Without which obedience and sympathy, we call in vain on Him that requires them both. It may be but little that we can contribute to the prosperity and the edification of our fellow members. But we must do that little, or we are not the persons to entreat God to complete those objects. It is a great thing, dear brethren, to be permitted to “come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” For many are our times of need. However, there is no need that God should do for us, what he has already given us power to do, for ourselves, or for others. So that those who seek that, will not find grace. Therefore, we said that mutual Christian prayer should precede and follow effort. Which at once assumes that there is effort, and asserts that there ought to be prayer with it ;—reminds us, that, without prayer, we shall labour in vain, and that without labour, we shall pray in vain for the good of our brethren ;—reminds us, that we must seek,

as well as ask their good, would we secure it.—Some Christians think that they have done a great thing—done sufficient—if they have prayed for the good estate of the whole Church militant. They greatly err. That is a great thing; but is not sufficient. Therefore, brethren beloved, think not so. When you hope that your heart's desire and prayer are for the establishment of the universal Church, or for this particular church, or for any member of the church, for your own satisfaction, ask yourself whether your efforts are directed to that end. If it be so, have great confidence and rejoicing; your care for the members, and your prayer for them, prove that you are a member of the body of Christ, whom the Father heareth always. But if it be not so, ask for more grace, first for yourself, and then for them. And ever combine the effort and the prayer of faith. Again,

V. MUTUAL CHRISTIAN PRAYER ADVANCES CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

Every thing that brings us into communion with our God may well be accounted a blessing—must be beneficial. Communion increases acquaintance; and acquaintance constrains to admiration; and admiration induces imitation. And to be like God! what is it but to be at once holy and happy? Therefore growth in these two, holiness and happiness, will be the issue of obedience to the text, because it will involve a closer connexion with the Source of all good. Every reference also to the circumstances of one another will remind us of the claim that our brethren

have to our sympathies. A desirable thing ; for I am persuaded that among Christians the want of reflection is the cause of much unconcern. This is a fact. But it ought not so to be. Christians, especially, should " consider one another." And the prayer of sincerity and of sympathy will insure this. Moreover, as in things natural, so in spiritual things, strength is increased by exercise. Prayer " gives exercise to faith and love;"—love to the Saviour and to the saints. By it, therefore, these heavenly graces are increased. Those who bend the knee in effectual fervent supplication for their brethren in Christ, will rise from it with still better feelings, and yet higher affections. So the prosperity of those who pray for the prosperity of others is advanced ; since it is in proportion to the strength of these graces. From all which it appears that while the injunction of the text is intended directly to secure the good of others, it indirectly insures the good of those who obey it; as indeed every precept of revelation does. Therefore " pray one for another."

In conclusion, I would commend to you two thoughts, which have been anticipated in the discourse ; but which I would more deeply impress upon your mind, as they require to be definitely apprehended.

1st. This charge belongs to Christians only,—real Christians.

This point may be easily and certainly established by three propositions, to all of which I am sure of your assent. The first is, that no one can come with acceptance to the throne of God, but

through the mediation of Christ, the High Priest of our profession. That is the plain doctrine of Scripture, repeatedly declared. The second is, that no one can come through Christ to find grace, that has not come to Christ to have life; which applies, whether the grace asked is for himself or for others. The third is, that every one who is really a partaker of the salvation of Christ, is more or less under the power of the Spirit of Christ; which Spirit ever produces effects more or less felt by the subject of them, and seen by others. So, then, none but real Christians can have the success in mutual prayer which makes it so desirable. Nor can any others have the sympathies that make it practicable. Not that they must have attained to Christian perfection, but that they must be pressing towards it. "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are." But, as immediate answers to his prayers, the rain was withheld for three years and six months, and then given in great abundance and to great advantage, for the glory of the God of Israel, and for Israel's good. He, however, was imbued with the Holy Spirit and with power from on high, without which prayer cannot prevail. Therefore, dear brethren, examine and prove yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. We have no doubt of it; and so address to you the exhortation of the text. But do you seek assurance of it, that you may be obedient to the text? to which I would provoke you by another thought.

2nd. *This charge belongs to all Christians.*

That is an exceeding broad promise of our Lord: "And all things whatsoever ye shall ask

in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." But it belongs, in all its fulness, to all that are his disciples indeed. They all may surely prove it, in proportion to their faith. It confers, then, a great privilege; and not only so, but involves a great responsibility. In virtue of it every Christian should become a great blessing to the world, and a yet greater to the Church. "I exhort, therefore," says the Apostle, "that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;" an exhortation which has an indisputable authority arising out of its inspiration. Again, having charged his brethren to "put on the whole armour of God," and specified its several parts, he adds, "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;"—a charge very explicit and very extensive in its requirements; and it is universal in its application. There is not a Christian but is included in it. Some may say, that they cannot do one thing;—some, that they cannot do another thing;—and some, that they really cannot do anything;—the extreme of humility or of indolence! But no Christian will presume to say, that he cannot pray. And, if there be truth in the words of our Lord, and faith in us his disciples, to pray is to do much,—far more than the greatest and the wisest of men can do without it. By the strength of this mighty instrument—the prayer of faith,—the very poorest among you might, "as a prince, have power with God and with men, and prevail." And have you no ambition to realize so glorious,

so Godlike a triumph as this?—and that not for yourselves, but for your brethren?—a sublime benevolence worthy of the sons of the very God of love! Some of you have no such ambition. It is beyond you, above you. Opportunities of so doing present themselves; nay, more, are pressed upon you; and you do not, will not, avail yourselves of them. We have meetings expressly for prayer, mutual prayer. And some of you, members of the church, rarely come to them, if ever. Some few cannot: and from them it is not required by us, or by Him whom we serve. Some of you could, but will not come: and from you it is and will be required by Him. But some, who love to be at ease in Zion, may say: “Can we not pray as earnestly and as effectually for our brethren in private, as in public?” Let them mark my reply; for I think that I speak by the Spirit of God: “You might pray as earnestly for your brethren in private as in public; and you ought. But you do not, if you could, unite with them in prayer, and will not. And as effectually you cannot pray alone as in communion with them. Since a special blessing is repeatedly promised to the agreement and to the assemblies of the saints. Would you, therefore, in truth earnestly and effectually pray one for another, do so in secret, and in your assemblies.

But, before I conclude, I shall ask you one question, and answer it for you;—a question which will apply in some measure to all, but specially to some of you. Why have you not prized this privilege more highly,—even as highly as you *ought*? Because of unbelief; is the short answer.

You do not believe that it is so great a privilege as you declare it to be. And you do not believe that there is so great truth in the promises of our Lord, as you assert that there is. And whence does this unbelief arise? Let me answer this also: You have wrestled with God for his grace for yourself and for others; and while doing so you have said: "We will not let thee go, except thou bless us." And in a very few minutes, or moments, you have let him go without the blessing; aye more, you have yourself gone far from him, apparently well content to be without it. Therefore you have not, could not have, the assurance of those who declare: "We know that we have the petitions that we desired of God." And then, though your lips would by no means utter it, your heart suggests that, as at such and such times you did sincerely and earnestly pray for particular blessings, which you never afterwards received,—prayer is decidedly a proper thing, but of little direct profit. This has been your feeling. I know that it has. Though you have never expressed it. And why did you ask, and not have? You did pray; but you soon fainted. That was the reason. But hear me: and believe my words, or, disprove them. Settle this point in your mind, that your petitions are according to the word of God, every way so. Then say to him: "We will not let thee go, except thou bless us:" and swerve not from that resolution. And, as the Lord liveth, even the God of truth, you shall,—you must,—prevail. Therefore, and thus, my brethren, "Pray one for another."

of the world,
by the world,
and of the world,
and to the world,
and for the world.

MUTUAL EXHORTATION.

—
—
—
—
—

HEBREWS iii. 13.

"But exhort one another daily, while it is called to day ; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

—
—
—
—
—

The Israel of God, under the former economy, dear brethren, was the exact and excellent type of the Church of God under the present dispensation ;—their journey through the wilderness, of our pilgrimage through this world,—and the rest promised to them, and possessed by them, of the rest that remaineth for us. As they were not all Israel which were of Israel, so they are not all members of Christ who are members of the Christian Church. Though varying somewhat, both have had very similar temptations, and shewn very similar dispositions. Great was the provocation of the Church in the wilderness, through unbelief and hardness of heart. And it has been great with the Church in the world. Their distresses were many, and their desolations grievous. "And all these things happened unto

them for examples ; and they are written for our admonition."

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews reminds them, and us also, of the faithlessness of their fathers, and its sad effects, to warn them and us against the same course, which must ever induce similar consequences. With affectionate interest he says : "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." And then, to counteract this tendency, he adds the charge of our text : "But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day ; lest any of you should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" This, you perceive, is an impressive and an emphatic charge ; and very urgent on two accounts : the threatening evil, and the uncertainty of time. And it has exactly the same force now, as when first penned, —the same force in reference to Gentile as to Hebrew Christians. Therefore it is now our business to unfold and to enforce upon you the duty which it inculcates,—that of mutual exhortation : —a thing not frequently practised, and not fully comprehended. A few thoughts upon it may put it in a clearer and a stronger light ; and so lead to the observance of it by those of you who wish, as members, and as a church, to walk in the light.

And first of all the general proposition immovably based upon the last :

I. MUTUAL EXHORTATION IS THE DUTY OF ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH.

We marvel greatly at the impiety of Cain, who

was of that wicked one, "in replying to the Lord: "Am I my brother's keeper?" And well we may. But suppose ye, that if, while we were reading the statement, and preparing to pass judgment upon him, a voice from heaven said in our ear: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at him." Suppose ye, I ask, that there would be a conscientious man, a Christian man, found to accept the challenge? I reckon that even he would escape our condemnation, like the sinner that stood accused, yet without an accuser, before our Lord in the days of his humanity. For who is there among us that has cherished that anxious interest in the well-being,—the happiness, and the holiness—of our brethren in Christ, which, as members together of his one body, we ought to have evinced,—to have evinced by appropriate efforts? None. Though we knew well that the members should have the same care one for another, and that our peculiar and ceaseless care should be for the prosperity of each other. Could we doubt that this is our duty, we have but to turn to the text for full assurance. It reminds us, that unbelief is an evil that easily besets the heart, even of those who have had the clearest evidences of the truth; and certainly leads to departure from God. It reminds us, that sin is a thing that arises from, and results in, delusion,—a delusion that hardens for destruction. It reminds us, that our term of probation here is but a day, the night of which may suddenly set in without any intervening shades of evening. And then, it directs us, on these accounts, to "exhort one another daily," or, in other words, constantly to "consider

one another to provoke unto love and to good works;—to that feeling and those fruits which are required by Him that searches the heart, and is pleased with that only in which he finds faith,—the “faith which worketh by love.” And is not this charge, on those accounts, most reasonable? For what are we bound together in one body? For our own pleasure only? No, surely; but for our own profit also. Should we not then “in any wise rebuke our brother, and not suffer sin upon him,”—whether the sin of omission or of commission,—urging to good, and warning against evil? We should certainly, when we have such an encouraging injunction as that of the Apostle James: “Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins.” The principle of which applies, with more or less force, to all sins and short-comings. Then, brethren, you see that the text (which is supported by many parallel passages) makes mutual exhortation a duty binding on you all,—varying in its character, like every other duty, with the differences in your character and circumstances, yet binding upon all. Therefore, “exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day.” But that you may do so with effect, mark a second observation:

II. SUITABLE DISPOSITIONS ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE DISCHARGE OF THIS DUTY.

What an excellent rule of life is that given by our Lord: “Be ye wise as serpents and harmless

as doves." It is enough to say, that the only wise God, our Saviour, was its author. For so it must be perfect. Otherwise we might express our great admiration of it. We may now, however, say that in nothing is it more important than in this matter of exhortation. The success of which depends mainly, under God, upon its spirit. For it is a most easy thing to imagine that there is a superiority in him that exhorteth, over him that is exhorted. This imagination may arise on either side ; but in either case it will awaken pride, and so be baneful. If the person giving exhortation thus flatters himself, he will almost inevitably shew an air of the superiority which he feels, and almost as certainly fail to produce any good impression. And if the person to whom exhortation is given, fancies that this superiority is imagined, he will refuse it, lest he should seem really inferior. Therefore, the Apostle Paul says : " Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness ; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." A wise injunction, sustained by a strong argument. And if that meekness should characterize us when rebuking the really culpable, much more should it when we have not to reprove past evil, but only to provoke to future good. We have the best possible exemplification of his rule in the Apostle's own conduct. He said to the Church of the Thessalonians : " But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children : so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not *the Gospel of God* only, but also our own souls,

because ye were dear unto us." With which agrees his address to the elders of the church in Ephesus: "Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one, night and day, with tears." And if such gentleness, with his importunity, became one clothed with Apostolic authority, much more does it become those who have no authority, but the faithful affection, approved by the Head of the Church. Moreover, a greater than Paul was thus meek and lowly,—even Jesus. When he spoke the words of eternal life, men "wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." And in reference to all his gracious and gentle exhortations, he said: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

Would you then, beloved brethren, be followers of Paul, even as he was of Christ Jesus, you must reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all long-suffering and gentleness. And would you so act, you must first feel so. You must cherish, and then you will evince their spirit,—the spirit in which you should "exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day." But yet further:

III. CONSISTENCY AND CIRCUMSPECTION ARE REQUIRED TO GIVE EFFECT TO THE EXERCISE OF THIS DUTY.

The order of this series of discourses, dear friends, has been the result of design,—a design

not without reason. First of all, I reminded you, that you are all one body in Christ; from which I then argued that you ought to love one another,—to care for one another,—and to pray for one another,—thus shewing a sincere and lively interest in one another. Now, hoping and trusting that you practically approve these things, I beseech you to “exhort one another.” I have thus placed them before this, because they must precede this, in fact, or it will prove vain; for so perverse a thing is human nature, even in the converted man, that counsel is unwelcome, and rebuke is unbearable, from any but a friend, a true and tried friend; at least when they are really personal. So that they excite to seek a cloak for any cherished evil, in the evil found in those who give them; so that they are of no avail. And what, if your exhortations were answered by the proverb: “Physician heal thyself;” or by the parable of the mote and the beam! The allusions might be unjust. Then your “rejoicing would be this, the testimony of your conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, by the grace of God, you have had your conversation in the world, and more abundantly to your brethren.” But if the allusions were just; if it might be truly said to you, “Thou which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that sayest, that a man should not do these things, dost thou the very things! and that a man should do those things, dost thou neglect the very things! Thou that makest thy boast of the grace of God, by sinning, dishonourest thou God!” your conduct would counteract all that you endeavoured to do

by your conversation. Would you therefore successfully exhort your brethren, you must display the virtues and the graces which you would induce in them: you must be "examples of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." For our Lord himself has established the common proverb: "Actions speak louder than words," by his injunction, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven;" an influence to be exerted within and without the Church; and those who obey that injunction themselves, will be permitted to press upon others the duty of obedience, as consistency precedes their exhortation. Circumspection, however, must also accompany it, to make it effective. The word of exhortation should be a word in season; time and place for it should be well chosen, if possible, as many will reject advice under some, who would receive it under other circumstances. Therefore, while a zeal not after knowledge would disregard it, wisdom and kindness would dictate consideration on this point: and happy is the people to whom the language of the Apostle is appropriate: "And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of all goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." Do ye then, with consistency and circumspection, "exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day." For, observe again,

IV. OBEDIENCE TO THIS DUTY WILL TEND TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF PERSONAL CHARACTER.



Duty and interest are surprisingly connected together—inseparably united, assuming always that the duty is discharged in the right spirit and manner. I have supposed, that some one whom you exhorted might have occasion to reprove you for personal inconsistency. That would not be pleasant; but yet even it might be profitable. However, where there would be no reason for such a reproof, the effort to impress upon your brethren the obligations arising from the advantages which they enjoy would remind you afresh of your own privileges and responsibilities. From it you would see the necessity of having those principles and feelings, the necessity of which you shew to others. You would perceive the propriety of being yourself altogether such as you would have them to be—a principle accordant alike with reason and revelation. There are, indeed, too many who can teach others, but teach not themselves, and are worse for the instructions they give to others, and take not to themselves,—become at once hardened and haughty; in which cases exhortation does not proceed from a sense of duty, but is a mere pleasure arising from a captious or a censorious spirit: but those in whom it does proceed from a sincere and ardent desire for the perfection of all the members will, by it, provoke themselves to that perfection, besides sustaining mutual interest and increasing mutual affection. Teaching and admonishing one another in a good spirit, they will soon acquire a still better spirit. Therefore, dear brethren, for your own sake, as well as for that of

others, “ exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day.” And now we come to our last remark :

V. THIS GENERAL DUTY OF THE MEMBERS NEED NOT INFRINGE ON THE PARTICULAR DUTY OF THE MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

At the threshold of this argument, however, I may be met by an objection, in this age of fancied liberty, or rather of conflict between spiritual licentiousness and despotism. In opposition to my assertion, some may say, “ Well, but this is taking for granted that there ought to be ministers, distinct from the members of the Church generally.” To which I reply: “ What Paul has taught us, and God taught him, cannot be wrong—must be right. Whether men approve it or not, we are at liberty to assume that it is proper. This (the Bible) is our last court of appeal, though our conviction of its appointment must be confirmed, when experience proves the institution to be essential.” If, indeed, any such objectors could point us to a Christian Church without a ministry, not nominally, but really without a ministry, then, we should honestly admit, (what we do not now allow,) that such a thing can be. But still we should earnestly contend that it ought not to be. For surely to spurn any gift from an affectionate father or a generous friend, is insufferable contempt ; especially if his wisdom is the certain pledge of its worth. And it is no invention of ours, but the doctrine of inspiration, the declaration of Paul himself that “ pastors and teachers’

are the express gifts of Christ himself. "Yes," it may be said, "they were ordained for a particular purpose and season." Truly so, (like every other gift of God,) for the Apostle declares that it was "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." And when these great ends are fully answered, the means will of course cease. When the last member of the body of Christ is edified to perfection, pastors and teachers will no longer be needed,—will no longer be. Until then they will be needed,—and will be; and exhortation is the great business of their life, in public and in private. To them, in common with all the members, belongs the charge of the text. But to them alone belongs ~~the~~ the charge: "These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee." And our present proposition is remarkably sustained by this passage in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians: "Wherefore comfort yourselves together," or rather (as the original term is that of our text,) exhort one another,—"and edify one another, even as also ye do. And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and over you, in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves." The Apostle says that elsewhere; and would that all Christian brethren were mindful of it. But here he does not say it,—cannot mean it. While charging upon all the Church mutual exhortation and edification, he particularly distinguishes among them

those whose special duty it was to "labour among them, be over them, and admonish them." And surely to infringe the order thus established were not the way to promote peace among themselves. Yet no one would think of writing thus to one of those assemblies, which some call churches, mere republics, without even an acknowledged president. However, I must not now canvass this question of the propriety of the Divine institution of the Christian ministry. After these remarks, I must assume that there is a class in the Church to whom belongs the language of the Apostle: "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself and unto thy doctrine: continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee." And I must assume that this class does not, and in the very nature of things cannot, include the whole Church, as most cannot give themselves wholly to these things, and the profiting of very many would not appear if they did so. We have come, then, to this,—that there are to be pastors over the people of God,—not pastors that have crept in or been brought in unawares, (as the manner of some is,) but those chosen by the people in accordance with Scripture and reason:—and that exhortation is the great business of the pastors, and also a duty of the people generally. But we have still the question: How shall the interference of these respectively be avoided? what line is to be drawn

between their respective duties, that they may not clash? For an answer, remember that the Apostle teaches us, that we "have gifts differing according to the grace that is given unto us;" and that by these the proper office of each is indicated. The obvious inference from which is, that he who has the gift of exhortation should, Providence permitting, give himself wholly to it; but that he who has not, should not do so. Moreover, while both these should be obedient to the text, they have different spheres, that of the one is in public assemblies, that of the other is in private intercourse. Such is the general rule. The ministers have also to exhort in private; and the members may, as often as necessary, exhort in public. But this is the exception, not the rule; and the minister addresses his people in public and in private as one that "watches for their souls, and must give an account;" but the member, his fellow-member, as one rightly anxious for his salvation and perfection, although he has not to give such an account. These, then, are distinct departments in the province of exhortation. But both are essential to the prosperity of the Church; for very few are qualified, by circumstances, to take upon them the pastoral office, with all its duties; and no pastor can be so much among his people as to obviate the necessity for mutual exhortation, were this at all desirable. So that although a dispensation of the Gospel may not be committed unto you, dear brethren, you have yet to "consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works." Do this

diligently and faithfully, and you will "purchase to yourselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus :" and (mark this especially, you young men, my chief joy !) the Church may discover that you have the gift of exhortation, and will then call you to give yourself wholly to it. For the only gift which our churches would have unemployed are those which are unimproved. And this is a true saying, as true now as in the days of Paul and Timothy: " If any man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work," which intends, by a bishop, an overseer of the people, not of the ministers of Christ. But a bishop must be " apt to teach," and " able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." However, our text gives you all the charge, old and young, rich and poor, male and female, as you have opportunity, without pretending to a gift which you do not possess, or taking upon you an office to which you have no title, " exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day; lest any of you should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

Then let me close this meditation with two entreaties.

I. BE EVER READY TO RECEIVE THE WORD OF EXHORTATION.

This is necessarily involved in the text, and is an essential condition of obedience to it. " He that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise ;" and he that would successfully impart counsel, must first

be thus wise ; for none of us is already perfect, though we may be " holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," like those who were originally addressed in our text : and though we may discern very few, others may detect in us many imperfections and improprieties, which will certainly mar the effect of our exhortations upon those who discover them, disqualifying us to give, and indisposing them to receive, our counsel: and however anxious for the improvement and perfection of others, we should be specially anxious for our own. Therefore, whenever we are admonished in public or in private, let us examine and prove ourselves, lest we have been at all deceived and hardened by sin ; and seek for more and more grace, that we may shew a good example, as well as give good exhortations. Thus shall we learn the wisdom that is from above. Finally, brethren,

II. BE EVER READY TO GIVE THE WORD OF EXHORTATION.

Let no opportunity of speaking a word in season to your brethren in Christ pass without improvement. Setting them the example in your own life, urge them to greater diligence, and yet greater devotedness, in their heavenly calling ; with affectionate earnestness remind them of their obligations, their vows, their interests,— everything that can awaken in them greater zeal for the glory of God : and do this, not with any air of dissatisfaction, or of dictation, but with ingenuous solicitude for their edification. The brief

space of time called to-day, is fast passing away, is far spent; so that very soon your brethren will be gone from you, or you will be gone from them, and there will be no more time for growth in grace, or the perfecting of faith: therefore be wise, and be kind. "Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you shall be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

MUTUAL CONFESSION.

JAMES v. 16.

" Confess your faults one to another."

GREAT was the candour of the Apostle of the Gentiles, my beloved brethren. So mighty were his natural and inspired endowments, so ardent his piety, so constant his labours, so entire his self-consecration, that we are filled with admiration when we contemplate his character ;—we almost question within ourselves, whether he really was a man subject " to like passions as we are ;" and conclude, that at any rate he had absolutely subdued them. But this is his record concerning himself, nearly thirty years after his extraordinary and effectual conversion to Christ : " Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect ; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended : but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

similar to which have been the sentiments of many of the Prophets and Apostles, and of people of God in every age: and it must so with every man that can appreciate and spare the perfection which ought to, and imperfection which does, characterize all men, even the servants of God. But there it ends,—a thing to be aimed at by all, though aimed by none,—Perfection. Great and grievous is the hurt which sin has inflicted upon us; introducing disease and corruption into our system. And there is not a question of deeper interest or of greater importance to man, than this: How can we be healed of this hurt? The children of God, indeed, through the faith of Christ, and grace, have within them the seeds of a new institution, and the elements of future perfection. But as long as they dwell in this world, they live in a body of death; from which, more or less, evil is the result: yet they may by degrees overcome their natural tendency to evil. The means of doing so are appointed by the God of all grace himself; and to one of these we have to point to-day: "Confess your faults one to another;" a text which has shared the fate of many passages of this blessed Book,—being perverted by one section of the Christian Church, (if, indeed, we may so call antichrist,) and therefore neglected by all others, except as a mere point of controversy. This is unreasonable and unprofitable, though done both by the ministers and the other members of the Church. It is a great evil: gives the enemy of truth and goodness a great advantage. And what if a passage is involved

in the Romish, or the Calvinistic, or any other controversy, is not every word of God in itself as pure as ever,—both true and good? And shall we, because of the interpretations which men have put upon the words of inspiration, virtually reject them from the canon of Scripture, by avoiding any allusion to them? No. The thing is continually done by all religious parties. But it shall not be so with you, dear brethren. That were not to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” It is a fact, that I never heard this text preached from in all my life, which I believe to be the case with most Protestants. However, there is meaning in it. There is profit in it. Like every word of God, it must be “profitable for doctrine, or reproof, or correction, or instruction, in righteousness,” and may be for all; therefore look at it with the eye of an unprejudiced and unbiased mind, that you may derive from it the good which is undoubtedly in it. As it has been made to teach what it does not intend, we shall endeavour to elicit this by two enquiries.

I. WHAT THE TEXT DOES NOT TEACH.

I believe that the Scriptures are written in the suggestive style;—that, in addition to the direct sense of the words, they often convey to the reflecting mind, many different thoughts, which may be their proper interpretations. I do not mean that there are no determinate rules of scriptural interpretation, so that this Sacred Volume is open to the imaginings of every mystic; but that, if a hundred ministers preached their own

thoughts upon any passage, they would necessarily differ more or less, and yet all might be in accordance with the text, legitimately drawn from it, and so taught by it; in which case they cannot be contrary to each other. The propriety of every exposition is to be tested by its accordance, first, with the particular passage, and then, with Scripture generally. It must be in harmony with both of these, or it is not the true interpretation. But if two proposed interpretations of the same text be contradictory, one at least must be rejected, though neither may be received. I need not tell you that our text has been explained in various and opposite ways. With some of these we altogether disagree. We believe that it does not teach,

1st, That the laity are to confess to a priest exclusively, or at all.

Any one who had but learned Christ, and knew nothing of the doctrine of antichrist, might say, Surely this is imagining an interpretation which no one would put upon the passage, just for the sake of combating it. Would that it were so. For if it were foolish to anticipate the teaching of one absurd error, it is wicked to declare it to be the doctrine of Scripture. But it is no fiction of which I am now speaking. In the Douay Bible, the English version authorized by Papal authority, we have this note to our text: "That is to the Priests of the Church, whom he had ordered to be called for, and brought in to the sick; moreover, to confess to persons who had no power to forgive sins, could be useless. Hence the precept here means, that we must

confess to men whom God hath appointed, and who, by their ordination and jurisdiction, have received the power of remitting sins in his name." Now, I do think, that any candid man reading the text, and that note, must see that the system, of which it is a part, was the first thing, and the Scriptures the second, with the authors of that version ;—that it was not founded on them, but that they are fitted to it. For, first of all, neither James nor any other apostle ever speaks of "the priests of the church," as a distinct class of men; though Peter and John do speak of the whole Church as a priesthood. Otherwise the name is applied exclusively to Christ under this dispensation. The term employed by James is "Presbyters," which is rightly copied into the Latin version of the Church of Rome, and literally translated "elders" in our Bible. Therefore, be not deceived, brethren, the ministers of Christ are never termed priests by any of the New Testament writers, nor said to exercise the functions of such. And, notwithstanding the distinction which is really made in some passages, between "Presbyters," and the flocks over which they preside, there is no difference put between them in this. Or, if it be contended that the people only are addressed in this injunction, then the inevitable conclusion would be that, so far from confessing to the priests exclusively, they should confess exclusively among themselves. But it is sufficiently plain to all that read with unveiled eyes, that the text includes all the brethren in Christ, whether holding office in the church or not. So that even Cardinal Cajetan, the great

omish expositor, says, "This charge is not concerning sacramental confession, as is evident from expression, Confess one to another." Wherever Auricular Confession derives no sanction whatever from this sentence, which inculcates mutual confession. Again, the text does not teach, 2nd. *That Christians are to confess to their fellow men in order to gain absolution from them.* The note which I have just read to you says: Moreover, to confess to persons who had no power to forgive sins would be useless." Now, I have to shew you to-day that it may be, and ought to be, most useful. But, first of all, we ask: Who can forgive sins, but God only?" Which, being originally the question of Jews, leads us to serve, further, if Jewish priests could not, how much less can Christian ministers forgive sins. We are pointed, indeed, for authority to such cases as that in which, "David said unto Nathan, thou hast sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, the Lord also hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die." But, on the one hand, Nathan was expressly commissioned to bear his message to David. And, on the other hand, how little David expected, or desired forgiveness from any other than God, is evident from the fifty-first Psalm. Priests, however, claim to forgive sins with much more of personal and inherent authority than is found in the expression of Nathan. But, though not ignorant of the ground upon which they rest their right to do so, styling themselves "the Church," I cannot now enter upon it, as I hope to do hereafter, when I discuss the controversy that we have with them. Yet,

now I must say to you, that I am greatly grieved that a purer church than that of the Douay version should still sanction such an error with its special authority. Those who claim to be exclusively, in these lands, "the authorized teachers of the everlasting Gospel," recite on every Lord's day this "absolution, or remission of sins, to be pronounced by the priest alone, standing, the people still kneeling : Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath given power and commandment to his ministers to declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins : He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel." But here, you plainly perceive, there is some confusion. We have already asserted, and I believe you have admitted, that God does not do, in answer to our prayers, what he has given us the power to do for ourselves or for others. Here, however, the priest professes to have the power of absolution ; and yet, instead of putting it forth, calls upon God to forgive the people. Now, this is inconsistent. But the error is corrected in "the order for the Visitation of the Sick." There we read thus : "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to his Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy forgive thee thine offences : And by his authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." This too, you see, begins with the same inconsistency ; but alters it afterwards, actually putting forth the

power assumed. Yet, this is not really more correct, though indeed more consistent. It is a sad,—we must speak faithfully—it is a soul destroying delusion. Nor is our reference to it now out of place. It naturally arises from reflection upon our text, which has been made to sustain it. And there may be some here, who, in the hour of sickness, and of threatening death, would seek human absolution. As you love your own souls, my beloved friends, see that you do it not. God has never given such a power and commandment to his ministers, as to declare the absolution and remission of sins. That is His prerogative,—a part of His glory, which he will not give to another. If you have forgiveness from Him, you surely do not need it from man. And if you have it not from Him, to seek it from man is to love delusion and death. In every case, ask absolution from God alone, through our only advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; except where you have personally injured any one, from whom also you should then ask forgiveness. With this single exception, our text does not teach confession to men with a view to absolution from them. Once more, it does not teach,

3rd. That Christians are to lay their heart bare to every one whom they may hope to be a Christian, whatever may be his character otherwise.

Reason is given to us, my brethren, not to dictate the interpretation of the Scriptures, but to enable us to understand their intention. It assures us, that every commandment of the only wise God our Saviour must have a purpose, and that purpose be good. Therefore, if a good

purpose will not be answered by our obedience in any particular case, in that case the commandment is not obligatory. For while the spirit of the injunctions of revelation must be observed by all men, at all times, the letter of them must sometimes give place to contradicting circumstances. Thus, for example : He who says, " Teach all nations to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ;" says, also, " Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under feet, and turn again and rend you." And on the same principle, we are not to confess our faults to others just to gratify their curiosity, or to flatter their vanity, or to foster their pride : for alas, such feelings are found even in Christians ! Nor are we to confess them, as some have done, from a pride in humility. We should not glory in our shame ; nor should we encourage others to do so. But if we feel assured that any confession to man would neither promote our good, or that of those to whom it might be made, nor advance the glory of God, we should make it to God himself alone. Yet, there stands the text : " Confess your faults one to another." And it has an intention and an authority. Therefore consider,

II. WHAT THE TEXT DOES TEACH.

We believe that it was " written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope ;" and that all the members of the Church are embraced in this exhortation. And the first thought suggested to *our mind by this view of it is,*

1st. That all of us have faults.

Were we to deny this, we should but be striving to deceive ourselves and others. I have frequently insisted on the universal proposition, which knows no exception : " All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." I have made my appeal for its truth to Scripture and to conscience, and proved that their testimonies remarkably coincide. So that now I have not to defend, but only to remind you of this inspired assertion. We may endeavour to extenuate or to excuse them. But faults we all have. We have all erred many times and in many ways. Our errors may vary as much as our own dispositions and circumstances. And we may flatter ourselves that they are few and small comparatively, we ourselves being judges. Yet we must confess, before God, that we are verily guilty, and that we are very guilty, each having sins which specially beset him. And after the most scrupulous and impartial self-examination, we shall have to say to the Searcher of hearts, " Who can understand his errors ? Cleanse thou me from secret faults." Wherefore none of us can claim exemption from the exhortation of the text. We all have faults.

Then it teaches us,

2nd. That we ought to have confidence in our brethren.

There are two extremes to be avoided in Christian character,—that of credulity, and that of incredulity. It must be admitted, and we have already allowed, that there are some that bear

the Christian name, who are nevertheless not worthy to receive the honest confessions of a Christian, deeply convinced of his sins and shortcomings. Some have seen this, perhaps felt it; and from it conclude that there are none worthy of confidence. From particular cases, they draw a universal rule; a thing as illogical as it is illiberal. A man that is always sceptical and suspicious of every one, on whatever ground, is censured in the world. How much more should he be in the Church, all the members of which Christ has bound together in one body. Surely between such there should be a generous sympathy and an ardent affection, which feelings, while governed by prudence, will beget confidence;—not an indiscriminate, but a discriminating confidence; and in every Christian society, not very contracted or very corrupt, it will find some worthy depositary. Some one who will not “reveal secrets, but, being of a faithful spirit, conceal the matter.” Though there may not always be that correspondence of thought and feeling which is so desirable, if attainable. And, since I stand here solely for your good, and so should not hesitate to utter anything that may tend to it,—let me freely speak to you upon this point. At the risk of being judged presumptuous, let me say to all whom it may concern, that in every rightly constituted church, there is one who ought to be worthy of this confidence, and ought to be accounted so until he has proved himself otherwise. I mean the Pastor. He, especially, ought, like the High Priest of the Jews, and like our merciful and faithful High *Priest*, to be able to have “compassion on the

ignorant, and on them that are out of the way : for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." He is "a man subject to like passions" as his people. But the Apostle tells us that he should be "not a novice, lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil." From which we infer, that before any man takes upon him the pastoral office, he ought to have so subdued his passions, and elevated his feelings, and enlarged his views, as to be specially worthy of the absolute confidence of the people of his charge. And in so saying, we envy not Rome her Inquisition, or her Confessional, for we abhor the one, and we repudiate the other. We claim no prerogative. We ask no privilege. We wish not to intermeddle with joys or sorrows which you want us not to share. We covet no knowledge of your feelings, actions, or circumstances, which your heart desires to know alone. Only this we would say, that if we are what we ought to be, you will find in us less, perhaps, of authority, but yet more of faithfulness and affection in private than in public ;—in us, you will find the friend you need sometimes, if not at all times. And we would add, with greater boldness, that in some of your brethren you ought, by all means, to have the confidence which the text teaches. It teaches, moreover,

3d. *That it will be profitable to acknowledge our faults.*

There is a natural desire in man for the respect and esteem of his fellow men. And when it is not excessive, it is a proper desire ; which, therefore, Christianity does not reprove, but purify. What,

however, is this confession of our faults, but telling our brethren that we are worse,—and if we reveal to them our secret thoughts,—far worse than we seem to be, or than they, without it, have a right to account us. In most cases, it is just so. If we increase their acquaintance with us, we lower their estimate of us. Here, then, is a loss. But we contend that that loss is more than counterbalanced by the profit. For, mark its advantages.

(1.) *It will make us better acquainted with our soul and ourselves.*

Expression greatly assists our thoughts, proving them to be either distinct or indistinct, and making them more definite. And the best way to measure our knowledge, is to express what we know. So then while we are pouring into the ear of a faithful friend the acknowledgment of our evildoings, and words and thoughts,—of our departures from God, and the dishonour we have done to Christ,—they will become more deeply impressed upon our own minds. We shall find that they have really been more and greater than we believed before. And we shall discover not only our actual sins, but also our constant tendency to sin. The effects of which will be these,

(2.) *It will make us more sorrowful for the past, and more watchful for the future.*

Expression not only assists our thoughts, but affects our feelings greatly. It does generally though it does not universally. We may make the humblest possible confessions with the greatest congregation, and not be at all humbled by them, feeling little or no shame for having done just what every one else has done. But we could no

individually acknowledge the same things in reference to ourselves alone, without feeling a degree of shame, which the thought of them never would excite. And the presence of a friend will be, if a silent, a strong reproof to us; which will lead us to reflect how we shall stand the heart-searching eye of the Judge of all. And thus shall we be induced to be more vigilant for the time to come. Having proved our weakness, we shall be provoked by our own conscience and by our friend's counsel, to seek strength where it is to be found; that we may henceforth overcome our adversary, through our Advocate with the Father. This will be a good result of confession. Again,

(3.) *It will give us greater affection for, and greater confidence in, our brethren in Christ.*

Whenever we place our confidence in men, it may be misplaced. One that we supposed to be a friend may prove an unfaithful man. So that for some reasons, we may regret that we ever made any confession to him, though in many respects still we need not. But "nothing venture, nothing have," is a maxim which is constantly acted upon in the world, and must be, in some measure, in the Church also. Yet, let me say from experience, that there is little ground for this fear. Christian men are mostly, notwithstanding all their imperfections, worthy of Christian confidence. And to repose it in them, is to render them yet more worthy of it. I have invariably found that to communicate my feelings, and to acknowledge my faults to those who gave evidence of Christian character, was the surest way to awaken in them the charity which "is kind,

thinketh no evil, and hopeth all things." I have always found that so much kindness has been mingled with their counsel, that I could not but esteem them the more, and love them the more. And I doubt not but that you will prove the same things from experience. And these, surely, are good effects of confession. Another is,

(4.) *It will urge us to greater devotedness to Christ.*

Some indeed put confession in place of conversion; even some Christians. A great evil; and one against which a faithful friend will guard us. The great object of such a one will be to provoke us unto real love and truly good works. He may not speak a word of direct reproof, but only remind us of all our obligations, and all our promises to our Lord and Master,—of all the satisfaction that belongs to his service,—and of the rewards that await those who have his righteousness and the righteousness of his Spirit. Which arguments will not be vain with us, if we made our acknowledgments in truth. If we were honest, we shall become more humble. And humility will lead us to learn more and more of Him that was meek and lowly in heart. In a word, such confession will induce us to love Christ more,—become more like Christ,—and live more to Christ. And if these are its effects, it must be most profitable. We go on to the fourth lesson from our text.

4th. *That it is proper to acknowledge our faults to any that may have been injured by them.*

It is our imperative duty as Christians, freely and fully to forgive our brethren that have in any

way offended us, when they confess their faults. It is also our duty to seek forgiveness from those whom we have in any way offended,—to seek it by confession. This is plainly taught by our blessed Lord in the charge : “ If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee ; leave there thy gift upon the altar, and go thy way ; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.” From which we are obviously to infer, that God will not even accept a sacrifice from us while we allow a just cause of offence to remain in the mind of any of our brethren. Moreover, if we do not seek to remove the offence which we have caused, we are not obedient to the exhortation : “ Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” Therefore, though we may fear that we shall sink in the estimation of those whom we have injured by acknowledging it, (which will rarely be the case, but usually the contrary,) we are bound in duty to our heavenly Father, and to our brethren, thus to “ confess our faults one to another.” But I must hasten to our last general remark from the text,

5th. *That we should heartily forsake the faults which we humbly confess.*

We have already remarked that this genuine repentance is the intention and tendency of sincere and scriptural confession. Yet our natural propensities to evil may prevent this effect. In which case it will not diminish, but rather increase the sinfulness of our faults. Therefore, it should incline us the more to alter and depart

from every evil way, that we may evince true repentance, and obtain the remission of our sins. For our confession to our brethren ought to be but the repetition of that which we have made before our common Father in heaven. And without we do it to Him "with a humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart," we shall not realize the assurance. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." For he has not promised this but upon that condition. He has never declared that he will forgive what we have not determined to forsake. Therefore, beloved brethren, let your confession to God and to men be ever accompanied by the "godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of." For this also is included in our text.

And now, having thus taught you the lessons that we have learnt from it, I would just address two words of exhortation to you all, my Christian brethren.

I. PROVE YOURSELVES WORTHY OF THE CONFIDENCE INVOLVED IN THE TEXT.

Ever cherish and ever display the kindly spirit which ought to characterize all the disciples of Christ. Shew an anxious interest in the purity and the prosperity of the Church, and of each member. Endeavour to convince all your brethren that you abound in affection, as well as in faithfulness,—to convince them by deeds as well as words. Win them by proofs of sympathy in *all that concerns* them. In a word, be obedient

to the Apostle's exhortation : " Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any : even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." Thus will you be, and thus will you appear, worthy of Christian confidence.

II. PROFIT FROM THE CONFESSiON OF FAULTS MADE TO YOU OR BY YOU.

It is but a means to an end. And if it is fruitless, it is useless. Therefore should you see to it, that by the grace of God it produces in you the fruits of righteousness, of which we have spoken. Let conversion follow your own confession in every case. And when you receive that of others, meditate upon it until you hear an accompanying voice say : " Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall ;" and lay it to heart. And " restore such a one in the spirit of meekness : considering yourself, lest thou also be tempted." Thus will you " fulfil the law of Christ."

MUTUAL EDIFICATION.

THESS. v. 11.

"Edify one another, even as also ye do."

ALLUSION has already been made to this passage, its subject being involved in that of one or two of the foregoing discourses. But it is worthy of more express and extended attention ; being very comprehensive. It was originally addressed to the Church of the Thessalonians, whose commendation accompanies the charge. Of them the Apostle entertained a high opinion ; and towards them he cherished great affection. He has recorded in strong terms his approbation of their doctrine and their practice. To them he said : "But as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you ; for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And, indeed, ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia : but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more." Again : "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." And once more : "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God ; for our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also

in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. So that ye were ensamples to all that believe, in Macedonia and Asia." They were worthy children of their most excellent father in the faith. Yet they, like himself, had not "attained, neither were already perfect." Wherefore he judged it still necessary to address to them the word of exhortation; adding to it, however, the word of approval. Now to you all, dear brethren, the charge applies; and the commendation, by the grace of God, to some of you. Therefore do ye also suffer this word of exhortation: "Edify one another, even as also ye do." But with every proper injunction, our course is first to understand, then to approve, and then to obey it. And intending so to treat the injunction of our text; let us consider,—

I. THE NATURE OF THIS EDIFICATION.

We have before considered at length the inspired representation of the Church of Christ as a body, of which He alone is the Head, giving law and power to every one of his members. A figure which we have seen to be very expressive and appropriate. We have now another figure, little less so, for the same object. Here the Church is spoken of as a temple in which God dwells by the Spirit of Christ: those who constitute it being so collectively, and being so individually. And the design of our text is to make them more eminently and more evidently so. Nor is the term employed in it the sign for something unintelligible, as many may suppose. It is true that some Christian men, with or without intention,

from ignorance or from conceit, utter unintelligible things about it : veiling their meaning, if they have any, in mystery. But, as you know well, we approve not that manner. We like it not, for two reasons : it is contrary to reason, and it is contrary to Scripture. Therefore, as much as in us lies, we should make our hearers understand all they hear. And we shall seek rather to simplify this expression ; observing that it includes a relation to, a resemblance to, and a reliance upon Christ.

1st. *A relation to Christ.*

“ Upon this rock I will build my Church ; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,” said the Author and Finisher of our faith, in answer to the confession of the Apostle Peter : “ Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Which was predicted long before by the evangelical Prophet, by whom the Lord God said : “ Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation : he that believeth shall not make haste :” or as the Apostle Peter himself translates it, “ shall not be confounded.” Such being the prophecy, and such its fulfilment, the Apostle Paul thus exclusively establishes them : “ Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” So that to all the subjects of this edification, without exception, belongs his address to the saints at Ephesus : “ Now ye are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets,” (not the men, but their writings,) “ Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone ; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto *an holy temple in the Lord* : in whom ye also

are builded together for an habitation of God, through the Spirit." Our text then assumes, that all who appropriate it are built upon that rock—"Christ, the Son of the living God," as revealed in the books of the Apostles and Prophets. It involves,

2nd. *A resemblance to Christ.*

That was a wonderful temple that stood upon Mount Zion ;—wonderful, apart from its purposes, in its splendour and symmetry as an edifice, and in the stillness of its erection. But it was the type of a far more wonderful temple,—a living temple,—every part of which is animated by an ever-living Spirit, the Spirit of Christ its foundation. And upon that living foundation nothing is to be built, but "lively stones." For a while other things may be mingled with them by unskilful builders. All these, however, shall be burnt out by the fiery trial, which shall but establish, strengthen, and settle those who live through the Spirit. How important then is the assurance of the Spirit's influence! And it can be attained. Kindred spirits, you know, act alike, speak alike, and often think alike. How much more those who are animated by the "one Spirit." Now the Apostle says: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" and again: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." Compare these two conditions, and you will readily perceive that if any man has the Spirit of Christ, he is a new creature,—"renewed in the spirit of his mind, having put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness ;"—in other words, bears a resem-

blance to Him that was “ holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners,”—to Christ. This is involved in our text ; which includes also,

3rd. *A reliance upon Christ.*

As lifeless stones are obliged to rest upon the foundation, so living stones should feel their obligation to rely upon their foundation. Readily acknowledging that confidence in Him is both due to him and for their good ; they ought in reason to act out that which they profess. Their entire and exclusive dependence upon Him, ought to be felt, and ought to be confessed. This is essential to the symmetry of the holy temple which they constitute. For, while the edification of the whole Church is the direct addition, by the Spirit of Christ, of others, as living stones, to Him, the foundation of that growing temple which is the habitation of God ; the edification of each individual Christian is the increase of his confidence in Christ, arising from the clearer conviction that he stands firmly only in proportion to his reliance upon that foundation. Happy then was the church to which an Apostle could say : “ For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ.” Theirs was “ the beauty of holiness.” And it is the vast collection of all such churches that constitutes, and will at length complete, “ the holy and beautiful house,” in which God especially delights to dwell. But we must ever remember that every Christian is a temple within the one great temple ; and that the perfection of the parts *is essential to the perfection of the whole.* For

the Apostle asks : " What ! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God ? " And again he says : " If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy ; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." Words which, (if taken in a general sense, as they may be,) may well make those who appropriate them, " rejoice with trembling." Therefore, my beloved brethren, Christ must be yet more and more the foundation of your faith, and of your confidence, whom you must follow yet more constantly and closely. Such we take to be " edification." Now consider,—

II. THE REASONS WHY IT SHOULD BE PROMOTED.

There are two extremes in the treatment of this sacred Book,—always to ask a reason, and never to ask a reason ;—both to be avoided. For some of the doings and purposes of God we shall in vain seek a reason. But I believe that we shall not in vain seek a reason for any of the divine precepts. There is none directly connected with the injunction of our text ; which might well be supposed to commend itself at once to the judgment of all to whom it addressed. Yet we may just allude to two or three, to which we might easily add other reasons.

1st. *Because it is the design of God.*

" See that thou make all things according to the pattern shewn thee in the mount," said the God of Israel to his servant Moses, respecting the ancient tabernacle,—the model for the temple.

And why was this direction so particular ? Because he that gave it had a purpose,—those holy places being figures of the true. How much rather then must he have a place in the living temple which he is erecting for himself by the agency of his spirit. He could well perfect that plan without employing any human instrumentality, bringing all the living stones together, preparing them, and settling them in their several places by his own “ still small voice.” But he has graciously preferred to put honour upon us. “ For we are labourers together with God.” Not the ministers of Christ only, but all his members also. We have all to contribute something to the perfect accomplishment of his plan. For to all whom he has built into his holy temple, he says : “ Edify one another.” And he has an indisputable right to require any thing that is not unrighteous from any of his creatures ; and, doubly so from those whom he has redeemed and renewed,—whom he has “ created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” Therefore should we be obedient in this matter also. And again,

2nd. *Because it will benefit our brethren.*

“ This is the will of God, your sanctification.” said the author of our text, to those whom he wrote it, which assertion belongs to all the members of the church. So then, as we advance their sanctification, we accomplish his will. And what is it to promote their holiness but to promote their happiness? Where do you find the perfection of holiness ? In God. Where do you find the perfection of happiness? In God. Both in one Being. It must be so. They necessarily go together;

and are proportioned the one to the other. It is not exactly so indeed, though in a great degree, in this our present state, because it is one of probation ; but in every state that is not, it is. Now and here, however, it is not possible to do good without getting good. Wherefore, as we provoke our brethren to the one, we promote the other. So that brotherly kindness, as well as godliness, would urge us by all means to "edify one another." Which we ought to do for our brethren also.

3rd. *Because it will make them a blessing.*

I have already intimated that there is something beautiful as well as holy in this spiritual house of God. It is beautiful as it is holy : and beauty has more or less attraction for most men. What ! it may be asked, spiritual beauty attraction for sinful man ? Yes. Or else what meant our All-wise Master, when he gave to his disciples the charge : "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven ?" Such men hate the light, and refuse to come to it. But let it be brought constantly to bear upon them, so that they must actually and deliberately close their eyes to get rid of it ; and by the grace of God it may pierce the darkness that envelops them, and penetrate into their very soul, and there beget love, the love that is the proof of life. Such has been, and daily is its effect. So as we provoke one another to walk as children of the light, we promote this effect,—their influence for good as well as their enjoyment of good. Therefore have we the injunction, " edify one another." For which we will mention one more reason,

4th. *Because, while edifying our brethren, we shall be edified.*

One principle is involved in this and in the preceding remarks,—the connection between doing good and getting good. Which is stronger in this case than in the other. We must indeed be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, if we could, with deliberation, and as a duty we owe to our brethren and to our common Father, provoke them to Christian perfection, and not be ourselves provoked to press forward more earnestly towards it. Indeed, we cannot employ the means we have yet to indicate without personal profit. We might indeed, by exhortation, remind them of their obligations, and refuse to remember our own. But this is only one among many means of edification, and one which requires others to give it due effect. Therefore we conclude that there are many reasons why we should promote the “edification” of our brethren. And we pass on to consider:

III.—THE MEANS BY WHICH IT MAY BE ADVANCED.

It is an exceeding broad rule laid down by this Apostle, in a passage parallel with our text: “Let all things be done unto edifying.” It applies originally to the public services of religion; but is also applicable to the whole of Christian intercourse. It affords many and various opportunities of pleasing our neighbour to edification; of all which we ought to avail ourselves: “not knowing whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they all shall be alike good.”

Foremost among the means of edification is,

1st. *A good example.*

"Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart;" said our adorable Master. And his Apostle Paul said: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." To which precepts, directing the imitation of one great model, it behoves all his disciples to be obedient. And this on two accounts, as a personal and as a relative duty;—not to be seen of men, but that being seen, the influence of their example may be beneficial; which should be their special endeavour in reference to their brethren in the Lord. There may be very few, if any of us, that could, with the confidence or with the reason of the great Apostle, point them to our own conduct as the rule for theirs. Nor will it be necessary for us to do so, especially within the circle of Christian society, with which we are immediately connected. Consistent Christianity must be seen and felt by those among whom we live. If we shew it, we need not speak of it; it will speak for itself. Nor will it speak in vain to those whose minds are renewed. It will lead them to reflect, to stand firm, to press forward. It will be doubly beneficial in itself and in its influence; producing much edification, and preparing for more by other means. Therefore I put example first.

2nd. *Profitable conversation.*

I mean religious conversation. But I have not directly said so, lest any should suppose that I refer exclusively to that which is spiritual. For few are prepared for this at all times; but in the life of most Christian men, there are seasons in which it would not be acceptable, and would not

be profitable. I readily allow, that such seasons too plainly prove our imperfection. Though the Royal Preacher says, with truth: "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven." But there they are, and they must be considered in our intercourse with our brethren. If we find that their mind is at any time unprepared for those topics, and that tone of conversation most proper for, and most profitable to Christians, we must first prepare it, and then introduce them. The mind must be gradually raised from earth to heaven; first, by giving a serious turn to ordinary matters, and then, by direct reference to spiritual matters. I acknowledge, from my own experience, that this requires great wisdom and prudence,—nothing more so. For it is often a most difficult thing to give a profitable turn to profitless conversation, even in Christian society. Some, indeed, have a very happy talent that way, though very few. Those, however, who have but very little of it, may cultivate it,—ought to do so,—and will not do so without some success. They may improve what talent they may have by taking advantage of opportunities which they have of introducing a subject of conversation; especially when circumstances make the introduction of spiritual thoughts appear natural and not forced; as, after any religious meeting, in the chamber of affliction, in times of bereavement,—when adversity has subdued the mind, or solitude induced a thoughtful mood. In such seasons, a word fitly spoken, will prove more or less forcible: and often will awaken *gratitude* to the speaker, for having excited a

fresh gratitude to the Saviour. And, by degrees, that which was very difficult, will become comparatively easy. Therefore, those who are willing to be obedient to our text, must remember the injunctions given by its author. "Let your speech be always with grace."—"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." From all which it appears, that conversation is a great means of edification. Another is,

3rd *Urging to greater consistency.*

This is in some measure involved in the two preceding topics, but requires a distinct notice. The inspired author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, says, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." Which same sentiment is involved in all those passages which enjoin mutual exhortation, which have already engaged our attention. And as every reasonable man will acknowledge his imperfection, every Christian man will bear with, and be glad of this provocation, if at a right season, and in a right spirit;—will not merely suffer the word of exhortation, but be thankful for it. There are exceptions to this: but I think, that when badly received it is mostly because it was not well given. Mostly, fresh reflection upon the debt of gratitude due to his Lord will excite in

the Christian a fresh desire to discharge it, which will lead to more or less endeavour. Reminded afresh of the conduct that becometh the Gospel, he will resolve afresh to pursue it. And such resolutions, by the grace and with the help of the Lord, will tend greatly to edification. Another means of which is,

4th. Earnest and constant prayer.

Whether we labour for the conversion of the ungodly, or for the confirmation of the godly, we shall labour in vain, without the blessing of the Lord. But this one thing needful may be obtained, especially in this case, as those who labour for the edification of their brethren, are but doing the will of their Father, which is their sanctification. Effort and prayer, however, must be united, and the two together will succeed, will insure the blessing. Perseverance in these two will greatly promote the perfection of our brethren. Wherefore the Apostle, whose abundant labours were well known, told the Romans, the Ephesians, the Philippians, and the Thessalonians, that he "made mention of them always in his prayers, giving thanks," for every grace which they evinced; as the evidence of his earnest desire for their edification. And, though the most devoted missionary cannot possibly equal his more abundant labours, the humblest member of the Church can equal his prayers,—can pray without ceasing. Then, dear brethren, neglect not this most easy and most certain way of promoting the good of one another,—pray for it. Did time permit, I should like, before leaving *this point*, to make a few remarks on social and

public prayer, as these may minister in several ways to the edifying of the hearers. But that is too wide a field to enter upon now ; and I hope shortly to devote a discourse expressly to it. Suffice it now to say, that all Christian men, who have no physical or mental defect, ought to be able to engage in prayer in the family and in the church ; and ought to cultivate this gift and grace, improving it continually when once acquired :—and that those who do engage in it in the society of their brethren, should ever remember, that the measure of edification derived from it depends both on the structure and the spirit of it ; though the answer depends mainly, if not entirely, on its spirit. But more about this hereafter ; as it is a thing of great importance to your mutual interests. These, however, are the most important means of obedience to the charge “edify one another ;” the nature of, and reasons for, which edification have been already pointed out. And now, beloved brethren, let me earnestly commend to you three concluding remarks, inferences from this discourse ; which I beseech you to ponder well.

I.—BE SURE THAT YOU ARE BUILT UPON THE
RIGHT FOUNDATION,—CHRIST.

I have taken for granted that your profession is the indication of your principles and of your feeling. And so have addressed to you this series of Discourses, intending them for every sincere Christian present. But again, after the manner of the Apostle, I beseech you not to take it for granted. Diligently and prayerfully inquire into

your relation to the anointed Saviour : and rest not in the assurance of it, without you discover the resemblance to him, and the reliance upon him, which we have seen to be its appropriate evidences. Let these things be in you, and by them you will know that you are in Christ,—living stones in the holy temple of which he is the sure foundation, and individually temples of the Holy Ghost. Happy are those that are in such a case ; yea, happy are those that have Christ for their Prophet, Priest and King. Let this blessed and blissful assurance ever be yours !

II.—DAILY STRIVE TO BUILD YOURSELVES UP UPON YOUR MOST HOLY FAITH.

A profession of Christianity is not all, is not enough. Christianity is a progressive thing. Every representation of it in the lively oracles gives us the idea of advancement, as proper, as necessary. Every one, therefore, that professes it, must be going forward, or will be going backward. You say, that you have “given yourselves unto the Lord, and unto his Church by the will of God.” You have done well. But you have not done all. Having professed yourselves, you have now to prove yourselves the disciples of Christ : which you cannot do without bringing forth much fruit. By the act of self-consecration, you have taken upon yourself solemn responsibilities, of which you will have to render an account to Him, whom you now call Lord, and whose will you are now doubly bound to do. You think that you now stand ; and we, too, think *this of you*. But, beware lest you fall,—fall

from your own stedfastness. Remember that the only way to prevent falling is to confirm yourself in the faith and love of Christ, by all the means of grace which He has appointed. You are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, of which Jesus Christ is the chief corner-stone. Then, ever remember that you remain on earth for awhile only for preparation for heaven;—now “fitly framing into that holy temple,” which is to be evermore “the habitation of God through the Spirit.” Thus, and thus only, will you become qualified to be duly obedient to the injunction of the text.

III.—EVER REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE BOUND TO BUILD UP YOUR BRETHREN.

This might be easily and certain'y inferred from the very genius of Christianity. And it is directly enjoined in our text among many other passages. It is not, therefore, a matter of inclination or of choice. It is a thing of duty, imperative duty. To it your actions, words, and very thoughts, ought daily to conduce. You have all a measure of influence,—some a great measure of influence over your brethren in the the Lord,—given you by Him, to be exerted for their good. See, then, that you so employ it, as you shall answer for it in the great day of the Lord. Be what you ought to be, as parts of the temple of God, which is holy ; and constantly strive, in affection and wisdom, to make your brethren the same. Then, will you at length realize the promise of your Redeemer, who is also your example: “Him that overcometh, will I make a pillar in the temple of

my God, and he shall go no more out ; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God ; and I will write upon him my new name." May this, brethren beloved, be your everlasting honour, and mine, through the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. That is eternal edification ; with a view to which ever "edify one another, even as also ye do."

Thus have I, in these seven discourses, plainly and honestly unfolded to you my thoughts upon MUTUAL CHRISTIANITY. I have reminded you that if members of Christ, you are members one of another in Christ, and that as such you are under unalterable obligations to love,—to care for,—to pray for,—to exhort,—to confess to,—and to edify one another ;—keeping back nothing profitable that pertains to the subject. " And now, brethren," wishing, above all things, your prosperity and your perfection, as a Church, and individually, " I commend you to God, and the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified." In that glorious inheritance, may we all meet at last, through the mercy of our Master and Lord.

